



Sometimes I have dreams that I'm on the other side of the window and doing what is right. Then when I wake up, I don't even want to open my eyes — because I know where I am. The day I wake up on the other side of the window, seems like it will never come, but I know it will.

check out the rest of Phillip's POW on page 8

Welcome to this week's exceptional issue of writing and art from the inside, known as The Beat Within. For your information, this weekly rag was established in the Fall of 1996 when it was a mere four page weekly coming out of San Francisco's Youth Guidance Center. Well, well, well, here we are 2006, and we gladly bring to you a whole lot of 11.20 writings and a big splash of 11.21 writings. The remainder of the writings that did not make deadline will be featured along side next week's 11.22 issue. We greatly appreciate all contributions coming out of the various halls, institutions and writers that work with us.

It's tempting to believe that the greatest contribution The Beat Within makes is to our young writers. After all, they are seldom credited with having anything of value to say, much less having what they write published for the world to see (and for them to feel the accomplishment of having been published). In fact, it is a great strength of The Beat, and we are proud that we can provide this vehicle for so many to express so much. One cannot overemphasize this strength. It is worth its weight in gold.

But one of the greatest strengths of The Beat goes almost totally unappreciated — even by those who raise the money to keep this unique publication alive — and that is the window it provides “the rest of us” into the reality of “their” world. Doctoral theses could be written from the wealth of revelations — or, one might say, from the sewer of revelations — that make up the content of every Beat Within ever published. As a society, we can focus great attention on the impoverished and hungry of Africa; we can devote entire national treasures first to the destruction, then to the re-creation, of Iraq; we can examine and denounce the Brazilian police for their brutal treatment of juveniles; we can lament the lack of opportunities for Mexicans that drives them across the border into our agricultural fields and our restaurant restrooms; we can point to the lack of justice in places like Cuba and China; we can condemn religious intolerance in the Muslim world.

But we can't devote a dime to rebuilding Hunters Point, East Palo Alto or Oakland. We can't bring our own justice system into the realm of “Equal Justice Under Law.” We can't acknowledge that our police, more often than not, terrorize the communities of our young offenders far more than they serve them; we can't provide decent schools, job training, parenting classes, or really any services that might move a child out of the devastation of their inner-city communities... because to do so would be to identify a real problem for which we are seriously responsible, and that might mean forcing us to do something about it.

And so, week after week, year after year, we provide this rare window into a world we our leaders would examine in every detail — if only it were somewhere far off, like Asia or Africa — somewhere that we could shake our heads in disgust, click our tongues in superiority, then go about our business as usual. Instead, it is here, in our country, in our state, in our city, in our backyards. And so we look away. We don't want to know. We don't want to be burdened with guilty knowledge — the kind that demands ownership and action.

If ever there was a world where the expression “Ignorance Is Bliss” prevailed, it is the world that our young writers occupy. It is the world they were born into, the world they grew up in, the world that taught them their values — while we look down our noses self-righteously, and look away.

So, in the words of the great French writer and social activist, Emile Zola, *Ja'cuse — I accuse*. Zola, the 19th Century conscience of his country, riveted the eyes of the world on his country's national shame: the racist anti-Semitism that resulted in an innocent man, a Jew, framed and imprisoned on Devil's Island for a crime he did not commit. In other words, he took up the cause of a prisoner, and accused his fellow Frenchmen of indifference to justice..

So, in honor of that great man, we accuse us “good people” of being indifferent to the lives of countless young people. We accuse our President and government officials not only of negligence and indifference, but worse — hiding their indifference behind high-minded slogans such as “Leave No Child Behind.” We accuse judges at every level of our judiciary system of thinking themselves better than those they so casually cast into hell. We accuse our conservative, Republican friends of holding on to the self-serving lie that they bear no responsibility for those who live at the bottom of our caste system, and for the lie on the other side of the same coin which implies that the poor are totally responsible for their own condition, and that the rich, made it entirely on their own, instead of with the vast support of generations that came before them and made it easy. We accuse our liberal, Democrat friends and colleagues, of caring more for the poor in Afghanistan than for the poor in East Oakland. We accuse the United States of America of squandering its incredible wealth by killing people abroad and imprisoning people at home; we accuse ourselves — all of us — of accommodating a political/economic system that puts its resources into punishment and not into prevention, that gets off on causing pain but won't spend money on cures; we accuse our society of expressing crooked values in the wages we pay football players versus the wages we pay teachers; we accuse our anti-war friends of being more concerned with wars being waged in far-off lands like Iraq than in the war being waged here at home on the young people who write every week in these pages. And we accuse all the above of not wanting to know, not wanting to read, not wanting to see — not wanting to act on the bitter stories told by Beat writers; in short, not wanting to give up any of our own material well-being for the well-being of those we sweep into our juvenile halls, our CYAs, our jails and prisons — human beings we sweep under our gigantic national carpet, a criminal “justice” system that now enslaves more than two million people!

And now comes the latest politician pushing the same old solutions. Speaker of the California Assembly, Fabian Nuñez, declaring that “the voters just don't understand,” is proposing to build even more prisons to add to California's already bloated prison empire. His proposal provides no money for educational, employment or rehabilitative services in any of the inner-city communities whose young populations will fill (and overflow) this latest proposed prison building boon. It's the typical politician's response to a problem that is mostly of their own creation. By continuously lengthening prison terms, but turning parole into a

trap that returns more people to prison than it helps, by criminalizing addiction and pot smoking, by insisting on the most Draconian 3-strike law in the country, our own leaders have created a monster that they can only propose taming by making it bigger! And the politician says that the voters just don't get it! Damn!

The voters are guilty of believing that public safety can be bought by creating this empire of prison slaves (and that their prison experiences won't affect and infect the communities they return to). The political leadership class is guilty because of their unwillingness to lead — to do the hard work of risking their electoral futures for the good of the society they claim to serve. The rich are guilty for bribing politicians of all stripes (oops! We mean making contributions to candidates and elected officials) in order to reduce their tax burden, and therefore reduce government support for the very social programs that actually could make a difference in the lives of the poor. And we are all guilty for pretending that the children who occupy our kiddie prisons are not our responsibility, are not our by-product, are not our children.

So, world, here it is in your hands. It requires nothing more than to open these pages and read about children born to parents unable to care for them, about eleven-year-olds responsible for feeding their younger siblings, about children who go to bed hungry in some of the richest cities in the world, about the easy access to guns and the difficult access to employment, about schools with crumbling walls and non-existent text books, about fathers who beat their children and fathers who never were, about being trapped geographically and mentally, about hate and fear, about the daily “medication” of alcohol and drugs, and about death, death, death. What have we created in a child when he or she has seen more death of friends and family than most of us see in a lifetime? This is what the vast majority of good Americans don't want to answer because, as the Irish poet William Butler Yeats asked in his poem, “The Second Coming,” what is “slouching towards Bethlehem?” Whatever the answer, the current crop of spineless political leaders will be long gone, leaving our children to deal with it...

OK, let's share the topics that were addressed prior to the writing at hand!

For 11.20: the first topic was “Walkin' A Mile In Your Shoes!”

The only things we know about your life and where you've been is what you tell us. So we wondered what it would be like to walk in your shoes — to live your life. Could you help us figure this out?

If we were to walk a mile in your shoes, where would our feet take us? What sights would we see? Who would we meet? What sounds would we hear? How would we conduct ourselves? What kinds of things would we smell? Would we walk or run? We're in your shoes now, where are they gonna take us?

The second topic was “The Saddest Thing You Own” — There are some things that we own that are just so sad. You know what we mean. Sad. It seems likely that these sad things light up our vulnerable places, one way or another, like a letter from a loved one no longer with us, a failing report card, or a picture of a pet that is no longer here.

We want you to share the saddest thing you own. What are these sad things? What makes things sad? Do things start off sad? Do some sad things begin as happy things that then become sad? Are some things only sad because for some sad reason we kept them? Are some things just plain sad no matter what? This is what we want to know.

Lastly, “What Was The Best Summer You Ever Had?”

For issue 11.21, “If You Didn't Have To Worry About Money, What Would You Do And/or Worry About?” -Everybody is constantly moving and in traffic for the need (or desire) to get money. But if you didn't have to worry about money, then what would you do think you'll be worrying about? Would you just lay around the house all day? Would you go shopping all the time? Would you try to give back and help? Do volunteer work? Become a community activist or political worker? Everybody's talking 'bout how they getting money, so if that wasn't in the picture, what would you do, how would you spend your time, and/or what will you be worrying about?

Our second topic, “Message To Your People” -The inspiration for this week's topic comes from an episode of a cartoon called “The Boondocks.” One episode was based on a thought: What if Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. hadn't died, but was just in a coma and woke up in the 21st Century? In this episode, Dr. King went on to deliver a powerful message about the state of his African-American people and how many were not doing the positive things he had envisioned for his people.

With that said, if you had the opportunity to deliver a message to your people, what would you say? Your people can be your family, your 'hood, your nationality or race, and/or the entire human race. Would your message be a positive one, like the one Dr. King delivered, or would you urge “your people” to get theirs however they can and never mind the consequences? Take this opportunity to send a message to your people and let them know what's on your mind — and be as specific as you can with your message.

And our final topic, “My Momma...”

OK, it is our goal by early July to have our latest editorial note contest up for you readers to consider. We welcome any suggestions on topics!

Lets close this editor's note by thanking the host of POW (Piece Of the Week) writers featured in this issue. Praise to Dominic and Heather from Marin, Brittany from Walden House PSK, and Billy from SFYGC. From the 150 Crew we have two from Lil' Toot, two from Lil' Mainy, Britona, Bianca, Tay, Wayne, Lon Lon, R, Tay, Big Vic, Phillip, Buddy, Chueks, and two from Evan.

With all this said, allow us to thank our good friend and acclaimed author of “Blue Eyed Blonde,” and “from The Palace To The Prison,” Sherman Manning, for his kind donation to The Beat Within. We would also like to thank the many of you who so kindly go into your pockets and give what you can to this worthy publication. Thank you, every cent helps!

This superb issue goes out to our children, and our future children, may they see a fairer and safer world. It starts with us! Our work is cut out for us.

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

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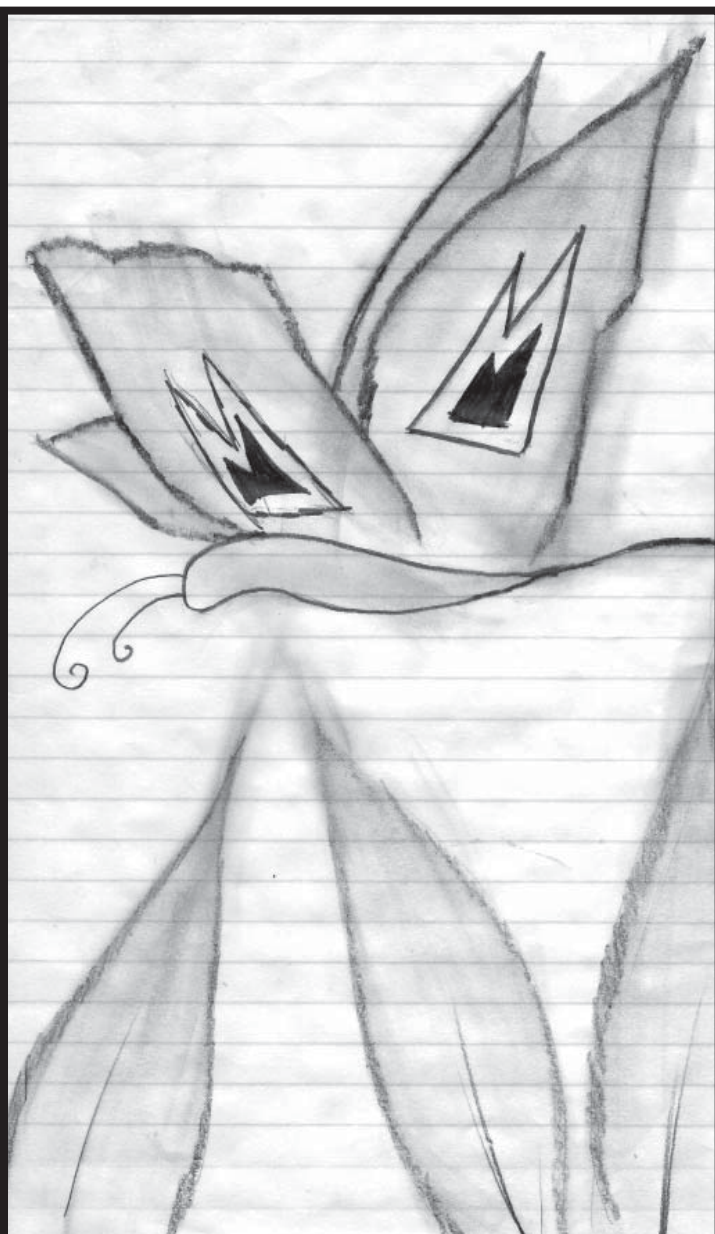
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www.thebeatwithin.org

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Corrupted World

this world is corrupt surrounded by racism
 children growin' up wit' nothin' but hate in 'em
 it's like venom poisoning our communities
 witnessin' tragic deaths before we hit puberty
 there's no unity, everywhere you see turf violence
 the 'bout-it 'bout-it actin' rowdy and most people
 remain in silence
 reppin' and claimin' a street that ain't even your
 property
 we're all strugglin' and tryin' to raise up out of poverty
 where's the democracy, what is this war in Iraq
 before we gave them our weapons, didn't know how
 they would act
 bush didn't want to get jacked on his oil supply
 so he declared warfare and let our young soldiers die
 why ask why — seems we're already in hell
 tryin' a help others but cannot help ourselves
 livin' to rebel, not trippin' off our families
 we need to open our eyes and focus on reality
 charging me as an adult, now I'm confused
 'cause if my moms beat me, that'd be child abuse
 politicians amused by all the youngstas dyin'
 i got shot in the head and had my family cryin'
 turf signs on the walls everywhere as I'm passin'
 cops specialize in their everyday harassments
 age eleven, already recognized by task force
 age twelve, already behind group-home doors
 let you take away my freedom, how much more could
 you ask for
 locked behind this door just starin' at the ceiling
 contemplatin' my future is just freezin' my feelin's
 all in my sight is murderers, rapists, burglars or
 racists
 thugsters, drugs dealers, caught up with three-strike
 cases
 so many faces, so many places to see
 anyone can make it, so many things we could be
 but we're stuck, twisted in insanity
 we're living just to die and that's reality
 one day i hope they let me out of custody
 my eyes are as dark as ravens
 done dirty by my friends
 and all of this makes me think when does wayne's
 story end
 i pray every night 'cause on the judge it depends
 and that's reality

-Wayne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Another one of this corrupted world's casualties, you've been wounded deep but it's not yet a fatality. So separate yourself from corruption on all sides, and cease to emulate thugs whether they're ripping off Iraqi oil or pushin' poison to own communities, raisin' up the death toll. Just as you say, anyone can make it if they can see through the insanity, cease to fake it and work decently and hard — yeah you can go far toward reaching your dream and at the same time help the world come to see that there's a better way walk than violence, hate, theft and murder threats lacing your talk. If the judge gives you that one more chance, show the world that Wayne's ready to step up and be a man — to show what a man can do when he's armed with intelligence, commitment and the truth. But whatever the judge may say, your future's really up to you — 'cause it's an inside job, outgrowing the sick mentality that typifies the mob.

Reflection

When I look at the "window" in my room, I see my reflection. I say "when I look at" instead of "out" — because I can't see out my window at all! Well, except for when it rains, because if the lights in my room are off and the lights outside are on, I can see the reflection of puddles on the ground.

It isn't freedom to be able to see out my window, but it's the closest I've got to it in about a year. Really, when I think about it, that is not a window at all — it's more like an extension of the wall, just a little thinner. But it does 'cause me to reflect on my life, how I have been living it and how I can change it for the better. I don't want to see that "window" ever again.

-R, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So the title of your piece is a pun? It refers both to the reflection of yourself you see in your "window" and to the reflecting (thoughtful meditation) you've been doing in your all but windowless cell — you, as it were, open a window into your own heart and mind for that you will never again find yourself in a cell like this. Props on the thought, now do what you ought!

My Life as a Bullet

One night in my young life, someone came into the store to purchase me. I didn't know what was going on. He picked me up and put me in a bag. That person also purchased a gun, a forty-five.

I thought to myself, "What is he going to do with me?" I was scared, but it wasn't so bad 'cause nothing had even happened yet. Then I heard voices saying, "That ninja gonna pay for what he did!" Whoever was talking, he sounded angry, enraged. He carried me to his car and threw me under the seat and pulled off. He blasted the music real loud for about twenty minutes, and then, suddenly, we made an abrupt stop. He reached for me under the seat and carried me up stairs.

I heard a door close. More people were already inside. He opened the bag and reached for the gun, his forty-five. Everyone yelled! I also saw other weapons on the table, and I had a bad feeling. Moments later, they loaded me in the gun — me and twelve other bullets. The clip wasn't full, but they said it was "good enough". They all crowded into a van and cruised around for a while. Then we slowly pulled up to a corner where there were people standing around looking at us strangely — and they suddenly started to shoot at us! The ones in the van, shoot back! The man who had the gun I was inside of, started to shoot, and I went blasting out, really quick, fast! I was now guessing that I was intended for one of the guys on the corner, but I had another thought coming when I came within three inches of the man's head and went through a window of a house where a family sat around the table having dinner.

I hit a girl — killed her! I felt bad, because I had killed someone. I went deep inside her, forcefully injected into her heart. I noticed she was dead, really dead. No heartbeat now. And to think, it was all my fault — but not really, 'cause if that man would've left me sitting in the store or sitting in his forty-five even, this would've never happened. But it was too late now, and there is no rewind button in real life.

-Lon Lon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Even though we said not to write about a bullet shooting anyone, you wrote a piece that showed just how powerful a piece that could be in hands of a writer who understands the tragic possibilities of irresponsible gunplay in the streets of our cities. While your story is a fiction, it is a fiction that has played out in fact, in reality, more than once, more than twice — far too many times. Some voters and legislators feel that we must hold not only the man firing the gun responsible, but also the store selling the bullets, or perhaps the manufacturer of the gun and/or the bullet. What do you think? The man who made you as a bullet, put that explosive power of deathly destruction in you. The man, or company who made the gun, gave the man who pulled the trigger the power to kill an innocent little girl when he missed his "target" — who might have been a fourteen year old boy (two were shot to death Thursday night in Oakland this past week).

witnessin' tragic deaths before we hit puberty
 there's no unity, everywhere you see turf violence
 the 'bout-it 'bout-it actin' rowdy
 and most people remain in silence

A Lonely Dark Place

If you was in my shoes, you would be in a lonely dark place. You wouldn't know how you got in that dark place. This dark place, is my life. The only light I see is when I am with my family.

I made lots of wrong choices, been with the wrong crowd, tried to be Billy bad-ass. Every time I wake up I feel confused most of the time, 'cause of what I did in the past. I cannot change the past, I can only make my future better. I need to get my mind clear from all the things I did. I should have never robbed the first person I robbed, because this person had a lot of money, which made me want to do it again. This is one of the things that led me to this darkness.

What brings even more darkness is my family dying from sickness. I wonder if I will be the next one to die of sickness or violence? Every time I wake up I think of that question. It wakes me up in the middle of the night, and I can't go to sleep without prayin' for my family, friends and elders — and even people I don't know. Being in this position, incarcerated, I am not able to be with my family, and I miss them, especially my grandmother who is go to be ninety-nine years old in June.

Today, as I sit in this max' unit, it feels like it could worse, but I can only take it one step at a time, because if I don't take one step at a time, I'll only get confused, mad, and frustrated! On a final note, the judge now holds my future in his hands. The only thing I can do is sit and listen, while my public defender represents me and the DA hates. I can only just sit and wait for the judge to make his decision about how much time he wants to give me. This scares me — not to have any power! The power us out of my hands. The judge has the power to send me away to CYA or to the penitentiary — it's all bad.

I don't wish this on no one, to walk the miles I've walked and to feel the pain that I feel. The way I feel right now, if I was to see the DA on the outs, there would be one more victim for me to live to regret hurting. That's just the way I feel; it's not a threat. This goes out to all the people living in the darkness — we must work on seeing the light!

-Tay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are seeing things pretty clearly, though you need to stop hating on the DA 'cause it was you who put yourself here. It's the DA's job to protect the community from crime, which is to say criminals, by pushing to have them put away where they can't hurt people on the street, in their homes, in the cars. Your lawyer's job is to defend you, and the judge decides — but the judge only decides your case, how much time you'll have to do and where. You decide the rest of your life by the decisions you make and the actions you take based on those decisions. Major props for seeking the light. Don't quit and it will change your life, so you will never have to walk in a criminal's shoes again. We're not diminishing the stress of waiting to be sentenced, it's hell — but don't let it add to the darkness that put you in hell to begin with.

When I get on the other side, I
hope I don't get lost again. The
feeling that you don't know what
you're going to do,
is not a good feeling.

A Gold Necklace With a Lot of Meaning

Probably the saddest thing I own is a gold necklace. It's not just a gold necklace; there is a whole lot of meaning and story behind it. It belonged to my cousin who passed away last year. He got it as a present from our grandma when he was younger; I also got one, too.

He used to be really superstitious about it and said it brought good luck to him. He used to wear it almost every minute of the day. When he told me about it, I just laughed. I didn't take him even a bit serious. He wore it to every single one of his baseball games, and when he won the city championship, I didn't think much 'bout it. I just thought they won 'cause he was good.

One day I took it from him and hid it, and at his baseball game, he hurt himself and they lost. I still had my doubts but wasn't gonna risk his safety for it. He was happy he got it back. So, from then on, he always wore it.

A while later, 'bout a couple months later I noticed he wasn't wearing it. I asked him why, and he said he got tired of it. That night we was kicking it in the City, and everything was koo' for most of the night. Later that night, he stayed back to get some gum, and we was 'bout half the block down when we heard gun shots. I turned and seen a car screeching off into the night, and then my boy ran after them and starting bucking at them. I thought they was just trying to scare us, but I turned and looked for my cousin and he wasn't there. I looked around and seen him lying on the ground, and then tears just came down my eyes.

I'm not the one to cry, but just seeing him with them bullets in him made me lose it. He was like my brother, we did everything together. My boys told me to bounce wit' them to go look for the guys who did it, but I couldn't. I just sat there with him in my arms. Even after I heard the sirens, I didn't leave him.

Something that started off as a lucky charm, turned out to be a sad thing. To this day, when I'm on the outs I wear his necklace, so I won't ever forget him. RIP Juan Carrasco. You'll live in our hearts forever. With much love and respect, I'm out.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a sad, sad story. What a waste, that he had to fall to the dirty streets like that, whether it was over color or turf or whatever — it was a tragic waste to the world and a terrible loss to you. We don't know if we believe in lucky charms, but that gold chain now holds a meaning as deep as love can reach. We're always reminding our readers that guns don't protect people, they kill people. Your story shows that's true. Your 'boy' busting after the car as it screeched off didn't add one second to Juan's life. Whether or not lucky charms have the power to save lives, for sure guns have the power to end them. RIP Juan Carrasco, died 1/4/04.

Open the Window

I don't like looking out windows, unless their open! But it is nice looking out a window if it is outside, not in a hallway where if you look out your window they say, "Get out your window!" One day, I won't have to look out a window at the outside. I will be on the other side — jut thirty days until I'm on the other side!

When I get on the other side, I hope I don't get lost again. The feeling that you don't know what you're going to do, is not a good feeling. Sometimes I have dreams that I'm on the other side of the window and doing what is right. Then when I wake up, I don't even want to open my eyes — because I know where I am. The day I wake up on the other side of the window, seems like it will never come, but I know it will.

-Phillip, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Terrific piece! Your words allow us to feel what you're feeling, that intense desire to be free! And that little moment when you quote staff telling you to get out your window looking into the hall, tells us exactly how oppressive living behind that window can be. Still, it's better to be out there being part of the outside view, than it is to have the best view of any window in the Hall. By the time you read this — you'll almost be free! Now do what it takes to make your freedom last. Don't go back to making the same mistakes as in the past.

How To Be A Kid

just wishin to be nobody
 reachin' for a star to shine with me
 maybe i grew up to be history
 'cause at ten and now seventeen
 i still don't think being locked up ain't meant for my
 reach
 askin' for help didn't teach me
 makin' bad mistakes showed me to learn from them
 and reach only my dreams for a bid
 because i was never taught how to be a kid

-Lil' Mainy The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Beautiful, moving, inspirational poem, even without the drawing which is terrific. We'll try to print the drawing with the written script, too, in an upcoming issue — but couldn't wait any longer to get these words out to our readers!

I even cried because I had doubts
 I wouldn't make it but I did and that's
 what matters most.

My Determined Shoes

I walked a mile and I started with determination and
 confidence and most of all a new pair of shoes.

The first step I scrapped my left foot
 causing me to make a scrap mark.

I was disappointed
 because my shoes were new and I wasn't expecting them to
 get ruined my first step

so I licked my two fingers and rubbed the dirt off,
 the dirt was gone

but the scrapes on the shoe was still there
 even though I was angry I dust myself off
 and did it moving after about fifty yards.

I had to go across wet grass.
 There was no way around it.

I had a personal conversation with myself
 debating if my shoes are more important or my destination,
 basically my goal,

I stood or stalled for about a minute and a half
 before I started taking the biggest steps possible
 trying to avoid anymore damage.

At the end of the grass experience
 there were many more technical difficulties.

Like, sand, hard rocks,
 water puddles that I stepped in
 after a while it didn't matter

all that matters was my destination and that I made it,
 when I was done my shoes were beyond wear-able,
 but those were the same shoes I made it through the wire,
 and my next mile I know what to expect.

Hard work

at the end I was tired

I even cried because I had doubts

I wouldn't make it but I did and that's what matters most.

My experiences made me conceited.

Stronger and most of all, I made it and it's not over
 because in life I would come across more miles
 and I will know from my experiences.

-Britona, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Excellent piece of work! We feel the determination to get to your destination. Such is life, we have plenty of obstacles to confront, and you do a helluva job writing this very visual piece. Superb! Now tell us where and what odds must you

The Saddest Thing You Own

What's good Beat? This is your boy Chucks. Before I get started I wanna extend my love to all, you know who you are.

Well with that out of my way, today's topic is the saddest thing I own. Which is myself. Why? Well let me break it down for you...

Y'all know Mother's Day is right around the corner and this vato is not with her. That's sad. I love my mom with all my heart. Even though I put her through ten screwed up years, but now that I'm locked up I have come to realize my priorities, which of my priorities is a my key to open a door to a better life and a better future. I'm glad I opened it already.

I'm not a child no more. I have a kid on the way. My baby's mama has always been with me through thick and thin. I love her. Not because she is the woman who is carrying my child, but for always being there for me and telling me what's wrong and good, but I never listen to her or my mom but now I wish I would have listened to her that night, but look at me now I'm controlled by this county.

It's not good being told what to do, when to use the bathroom and when to eat. So I just want y'all to know that I own myself no matter what, that's the saddest thing I own: myself. And to all that have a child and a baby mama, tell her what Chucks said. Happy Mother's Day I love you, be safe.

-Chucks, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you for writing such a true tribute to mothers everywhere and for being honest about your own mistakes and sharing with The Beat the realizations you've had since getting locked up. Get out and stay out! We know that if it's what you want, you can make it happen.

Confused

Perhaps, when I am released
 Unbelievable opportunities will arise

Sometimes I dream of freedom

Sex and drugs, and all that jazz

Yet, I always wake up in here

Laying down on the same green mattress

Inside the same cell

Pregnant with the same thought

"Someday I'll be something"

Maybe one day

After dreaming of the pleasures of life

Kissing the girl in my fantasy

Everything will be true when I awake

Maybe my life is a dream

Yellow roses are really blooming

Day and night I think about that

It drives me crazy

Creates so much hope

And killing it all when my eyes open

Half of my time here

I've spent asking for God for freedom and forgiveness

Reaching out, but what is God?

Do you know?

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: Powerful piece. Now tell us of your God, the God you are speaking to. We know how hard it is to live in the hall waiting on freedom, at least you have that to wait for, while many of our young writers are waiting in the hall to go off to prison, CYA etc. etc. You have incredible talent, you know that, do not waste it dwelling on your past, use it to prove your critics wrong and make yourself happy. Find happiness!

I wish I would have listened to her that night,
 but look at me now I'm controlled by this county

Daddy's Gone (Evan's Part)

when my birds start chirpin'
and the words start hurtin'
i don't wanna hear that daddy was there
because i made it on governed cheese
and slept with the gentle breeze
so that told me that my father didn't care
now i'm posted with bro's
hostin' a glock and a four-fifth
but the static got the state in my way
and with all the coke that i'm coppin'
and all pills that i'm poppin'
just to kill the problems
that i face in a day, face in a day
daddy gone wit' the rollin' stones
switchin' in homes
he had his throne
but forgot to hold it down for his own
see the only one you fooled
was ya'self in the end
you rolled wit' women
left me out and forced to roll wit' my friends
i had some goals to win too
but i ran into trouble
i wasn't patty-carin'-duke
i had intentions to bubble
when i was young you kicked me out
wit' nothin' more than a hanger
i love my father but i'll never
put my trust in a stranger
i'm fussin' in anger
you're lucky i don't carry a picket
'cause if i did it would tell you
that my father's a cricket
bent up and twisted
tryin' to buy me
wit' a check and a bumper
but at the hospital
i'm the one was checkin' up on ya
every ten minutes
i was cryin' when you slept in the bed
yeah i was sad 'cause it looked like
you was lyin' there dead
but when the birds start chirpin'
and you're feelin' the pain
all you can say
is that i never disrespected your name
when my birds start chirpin'
and the words start hurtin'
i don't wanna hear that daddy was there
because i made it on governed cheese
and slept with the gentle breeze
so that told me that my father didn't care
now i'm posted with bro's
hostin' a glock and a four-fifth
but the static got the state in my way
and with all the coke that i'm coppin'
and all pills that i'm poppin'
just to kill the problems
that i face in a day, face in a day

-Evan, 150 Crew

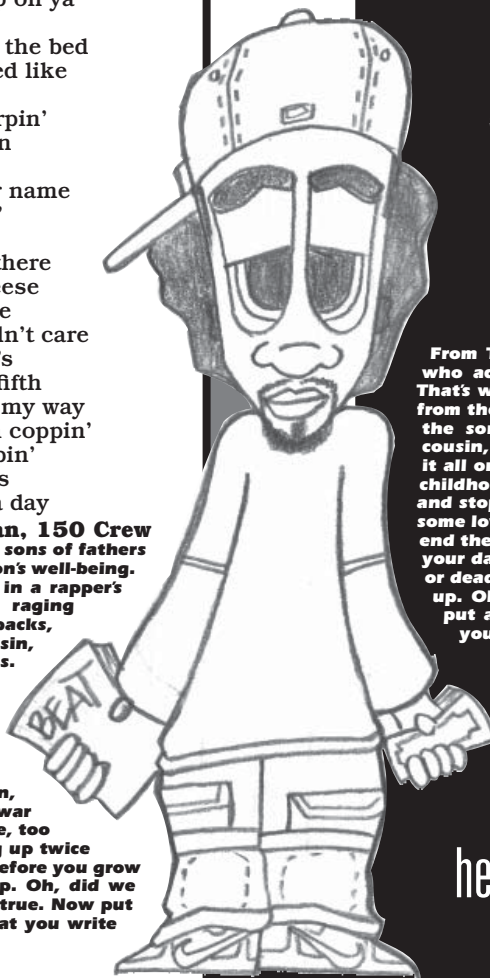
From The Beat: Too many fatherless sons, or sons of fathers who acted like bums when it came to their son's well-being. That's what we're seeing in our pages, and in a rapper's writing from the cages their locked in, raging without and within. Then the sons roll in packs, peddling sacks to someone's auntie, cousin, mother, brother, sister — those are the facts. And blame it all on your father's failures to act like a father and save your childhood from destruction. It's time to be a father 'cause you've got your own son; so stop spreading disease with no compunction. It's time for you to function in a higher mode. Show yourself some love and your son, too; put down the forty-five and end the war inside of you and the part you play out there, too — before resenting your dad has you ending up twice as bad as him: with life in the pen' or dead before you grow up. It's time for the man in you to show up. Oh, did we say, your rhymes are strong, fast, tight and true. Now put as much intelligence in how you live as what you write — do your do!

Daddy's Gone (Buddy's Part)

when my birds start chirpin'
and the words start hurtin'
i don't wanna hear that daddy was there
because i made it on governed cheese
and slept with the gentle breeze
so that told me that my father didn't care
now i'm posted with bro's
hostin' a glock and a four-fifth
but the static got the state in my way
and with all the coke that i'm coppin'
and all pills that i'm poppin'
just to kill the problems
that i'm facin' today, facin' today
i remember back in the day
when you showed that you cared
now i look in the mirror and get scared
'cause i'm facing my fear
shakin' the tears from fallin' down to the floor
because you don't come around me no more
don't hear your voice
so i can't hear the sound of the war
poundin' for more
you got me close to explodin'
my arms open
but i'm losing composure
hopin' to leave you broken
the closest i would come
to blow my nose on my sleeve
to tell the truth
i hate the fact i'm your seed
i can't believe
i just wish you'd be the dad i would be
when my birds start chirpin'
and the words start hurtin'
i don't wanna hear that daddy was there
because i made it on governed cheese
and slept with the gentle breeze
so that told me that my father didn't care
now i'm posted with bro's
hostin' a glock and a four-fifth
but the static got the state in my way
and with all the coke that i'm coppin'
and all pills that i'm poppin'
just to kill the problems
that i'm facin' today, facin' today

-Buddy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Too many fatherless sons, or sons of fathers who acted like bums when it came to their son's well-being. That's what we're seeing in our pages, and in a rapper's writing from the cages their locked in, raging without and within. Then the sons roll in packs, peddling sacks to someone's auntie, cousin, mother, brother, sister — those are the facts. And blame it all on your father's failures to act like a father and save your childhood from destruction. It's time to be a father to yourself and stop spreading disease with no compunction. Show yourself some love and your community, too; put down the forty-five and end the war inside you and outside, too — before your resenting your dad has you ending up twice as bad as him: life in the pen' or dead before you grow up. It's time for the man in you to show up. Oh, did we say, your rhymes are strong, fast, tight. Now put as much intelligence in how you live as you do in what you write!



I wish I would have listened to
her that night, but look at me now I'm
controlled by this county

No Comments

We do not live more fully merely by doing more, seeing more, tasting more, and experiencing more then we ever have before.

On the contrary, some of us need to discover that we will not begin to live more fully until we have the courage to do and see and taste and experience much less than usual.

A tourist may go through a museum lookin' conscientiously at everything important, and come out less alive than when he went in. He has looked at everything and seen nothing. He has done a great deal and it has only made him tired. If he had stopped a moment to look at one picture he really liked and forgotten about all the others, he might console himself but in himself...

Our being is not to be enriched merely by activity or experience as such. Everything depends on the quality of our acts and our experiences. A multitude of badly performed actions and of experiences only half lived exhausts and depletes our being. By doing things badly we make ourselves less real. This growing unreality cannot help but make us unhappy and fill us with a sense of guilt... Conscience can't think of nothing better to tell us than to multiply the quantity of our acts, without perfecting their quality. And so we go from bad to worse, exhaust ourselves, empty our whole life of all content and fall. Into despair.

-Bianca, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You wrote "no comment!" but we just have to say...wow.

Free Emotions

Tears roll down my cheeks as I talk in therapy
Nothing can stop it now
I've wanted to cry for days, and now it's happening
For an hour today, my smile is a frown
Poetry is pain within; its tears I cry on the inside
Tears are the poems from my darkened soul
I scream loudly, but no one can hear
It sends shivers down my spine
As depression takes its simply complex toll
You've never noticed how I'm happy and sad
At the same time
You sit there and don't notice, because I hide it
You don't notice how we write the same rhyme
And I don't know if I'll ever even make it
Well, I guess I've spent the days I deserve
And a whole bunch more
Than I'm willing to admit it's worth
But even when I'm in here
My mind breaks down the door
And soars freely in the skies

-Heather, Marin

From The Beat: Incredibly touching poem! You have a special gift, a gift as a poetic writer, a deep thinker, and a young woman who is truly coming to terms with bettering her life. With the right support you will get there, yet if you must do it alone, you have your writing. Keep pushing yourself, your tears, your frustrations, your concerns do not go unnoticed when you share your world with The Beat Within.

Reality

as my pencil meets the paper you can take it or leave it
our last breath is all the same although i hate to believe it
we been walkin' towards our caskets since the days of birth
and we're still products of the poison that still plagues the earth
as my pencil meets the paper you can take it or leave it
our last breath is all the same although i hate to believe it
we been walkin' towards our caskets since the days of birth
and we're still products of the poison that still plagues the earth
why do we hate one another then go be fake to another
you tell ya lies to ya mother but keep it real wit' a runner
cry through the pain and the thunder, i ain't no range or hummer
but i done lived in shady places where it rains in the summer
see i done been to hell and back but dog i'll die for my people
try to be equal then spread ya wings and fly like an eagle
and i was told to think it out before i spoke on my mind
but then i put my words together, now i speak through a rhyme
and still there ain't no kinda hope for people that's in my century
we breakin' down schools and we buildin' more penitentiaries
a half a decade and now the world's at its worst
and up in oakland, half the population lays in a hearse
it doesn't say up in the bible that we're destined to fail
so if we hustlin' to eat, does it mean we goin' to hell
as my pencil meets the paper you can take it or leave it
but just remember, set ya goals and then you reach to achieve it

-Evan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: For sure you soar like an eagle as your words take flight, and roar like a lion in the jungle's dark night. The fire in your eyes will light the way, even if there's no other light to see till the break of day. Have you ever read A People's History of the United States, by Howard Zinn. Well, it's pretty dry like academic writing but it does give history from the people's point of view and not the few who rule and pay historians to present only their point of view. What he did for American history, you're doing for today's youth, giving a voice to the other side, the people's vision of the truth — what's more, you do it like a poet as your words soar, roar and sing! It is a dark time, but with the power of truth we may yet let freedom ring! But if slavery's the truth in twenty-first century American city streets, and slaves have got to hustle by whatever means to make ends meet, then trumpet the truth like archangel Gabriel's celestial horn, 'cause the darkness of lies will rule till the light of truth is reborn. The truth, take it or leave it; but until it's told, who could believe it?



My Message To Oakland

We as young Black men need to be helped my getting a better education. We need to take care of our community by not throwing trash down, not selling dope, less guns, less violence — guns cause violence, too. If there were no guns period, there would be less violence.

We need as young Black men to stop disrespecting our women and hating one another, 'cause in the end we find ourselves locked up, either that or six feet under. Young Black women need their education, too. Men, and women also, need to stop fighting and killing one another. The older generation need to be better role models and talk to us in younger generation. I also don't think there are enough jobs for us — it's a struggle. Plus, they're tryin' to move blacks out of Oakland.

Oakland is screwed up 'cause of drugs, violence, and us young men who are effing up our own city. Some men do not even care about their own house where their own mom and dad live. It gets this way 'cause many look up to the wrong people. As a young Black man, I can see that it's not just a struggle for us — it's a struggle for all races. The government needs to recognize this. Instead of putting out more crooked police officers, they need to spend their money on the city. And the people of Oakland need to pay attention to their city. They need to take pride in their community and not take things for granted. We need to help everybody, and everybody needs to come together. We must work together.

-Tay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We get your message loud and clear and wish you could take your message out of here to teach and preach it, 'cause the people and the city of Oakland need it to see it's true. But then the question remains, even after you explain what we all need to do — how are we going to get the government and the people to do it? Oakland's been stuck in a rut for some forty years now. Maybe if more people like you put out this point of view and lived it, too, we'd find the leadership we need to move toward working together to make life better for the people of Oakland. Okay?

Back Into The World

I will be leaving this Monday, back into the world again. I hope I do right and fight for what I want in life. I want to finish high school, even knowing that I'm so far behind. I want a good job so I can rely on myself and be responsible for myself. I don't want to hide anymore from myself. I want my family to not worry about me. I want them to be proud of me. I'm so tired of messing up. I'll be 18 in less than a month, so I really gotta keep my game tight.

-Brittany, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We admire your determination and your goals very much, Brittany. Don't worry about how far behind you are. The old saying is true, that a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. You've already taken that step, so now all you have to do is keep walking forward. Good luck!

Oakland is screwed up 'cause of
drugs, violence, and us young men
who are effing up our own city.

Women

A woman's heart is precious. It is very sensitive. A woman need to be treated good all the time. I'm tired of these ninjas treating these women like shhh. I wanna see all women treated with the proper respect that all women in the world deserve.

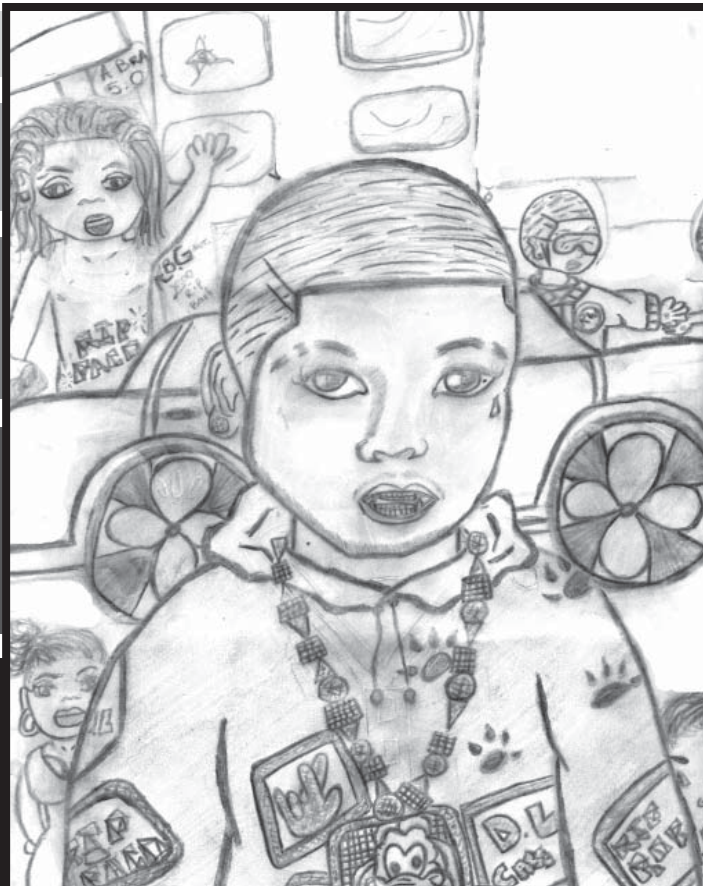
The women love us and we treat them like shhh, cheat on them. Some ninjas hit their woman. That ain't coo'. A real man never put his hands on a woman.

They give us sex, do everything we tell them to do in bed. We still treat them like just a piece of ass. We make them cry.

Man, women love us to death these ninjas need to step they game up and treat the women with proper respect for our women. Ninjas take responsibility and treat these women like they want somebody to treat they mama, and then they will know how to treat these young ladies. Ninja treat your women right. I'm out Beat. Late.

-Billy B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We think you said it all, Billy, when you wrote that we should treat our women like we want our mothers to be treated. If everyone did that, we wouldn't have to worry about disrespect. But you know, Billy, it's not just women whose hearts are precious. Your heart is also precious, and we respect it very much.



A real man never
put his hands on a woman.

For The Hearts Who Could Love

What it do-doo y'all! I'm writing on something I hope some may relate to — basically, I'm talking about simple things which become difficult. The first thing I want to say, before I start, is what's up wit' P? Whatever's right, make sure you do it. I been here for a minute wit' my mama inside and out: Mrs. Wadookie, I love you too; and my understanding and caring step-auntie Mo P. I mean, man, I could go on forever!

I grew up in here, and I been told I'm a waste of a good young man for a young woman, because I'm locked up. Anyways I'm doing a'ight. Well, I'll start off by saying desire is not love: desire is pleasure. Us teenagers get that all mixed up with the simple thing we call love. See, we don't love — we crave to be loved! The reason for that is because we never felt or had love in our lives. Mere feelings ain't love. Moments of excitement ain't love. I ain't tryna sound all Doctor Phil or nothing, but, you feel me, I'm just keeping it solid. We struggle against this revelation. The struggle takes many turns, dominance or subservience, fear or hope, jealousy or acceptance, — and hate! The difficulty is that we don't love.

And if we do love, we want it to function in a particular way. We don't give it freedom. The female wit' a full figure and pretty face, you want to love her, which means that you force love. For your "love" doesn't come out of want, it comes out of need. We love with our minds and not with our hearts. The feeling of love and the pain of love for us comes from the mind! One thing the heart doesn't do is speak, but what the eyes see, the heart remembers — and the heart can't express itself! Yet mind can multiply itself, while love cannot. The heart has nothing to do with "love" no more. It's past that in this generation.

From what I've learned, love only reaches into souls now, 'cause the soul only reaches for one thing, and that's the history of the quest of love itself! Mind can make itself invulnerable, but love can't. Mind can always withdraw, like when Keisha Cole said, "I changed my mind. I don't love you no more." How can you love someone through the mind? The mind can be exclusive. And it can become personal or impersonal. Love is not to be compared nor hedged about! I mean, man, why should it?

We don't even love life, man, or life don't love us! Our difficulty lies in that which we call love. For us it is really merely of the mind. We fill our hearts with things of the mind and so keep our hearts ever empty and expectant. We were empty of heart when we failed to realize how to love ourselves! Man, even as I speak, I realize how empty I am! It is as though the mind that clings, that is envious, that holds and destroys the people we say are ugly, the people we say we hate, the person we live inside of and the generation we as a part of help create — the mind is all we have and it destroys us.

Therefore, our life is dominated by temptation; because we don't love and let it be alone! Rather what drives us is the feeling that we have to be loved, we crave to be loved! It is that craving which shapes our understanding of love. We give in order to receive, and that is the generosity of the mind — it is not of the heart. The scheming mind is ever seeking certainty, security, but, ask yourself, can love be made certain by the mind? Can the mind, which exists essentially in time and schemes to manage the give-and-take of everything in time — can that temporal mind catch love which is essentially eternal, which partakes of and exists in it's own unchanging and perfect eternity?

That's why if anybody was in here to do maybe ten months, then leaves here and goes to a group home for ten more months with no visits, home pass, or nothing — that person you say you love and the person who said she/he loves you, won't write you everyday. It's like the first few

months or maybe six, that whole time is wasted because to them the love wasn't love. Rather, it was for you to meet that person to remember, while the love you had is gradually forgotten.

We've been through a lot in life; we were guilty before proven innocent. Because we make so many mistakes, it's hard to learn from them, and it keeps you down, for sure, if you been in the system like me! A lot have called me dumb because I've come here thirty times — and I've escaped from court and I've run from every group home I been to! There are no excuses in life, because life was given to me as is to make of it what I will. So anyone looking for an excuse won't find one.

Being dumb, a thief and liar, since I was ten years old, I came back and forth, to and from this place every year until now. I've missed every holiday, six summers, six years of school, and eight years of freedom! It's funny (not ha-ha funny but funny peculiar) because I'm not a bad dude! I just taught myself to become who I wanted to be. I mean, I was given lectures and advice, I was given chances and care. The only thing I wasn't taught or told, was how to be kid, a teenager, and how to become a man! I was taught much, but never that. So I've had to teach myself. I taught myself to search, and I taught myself how to dream and share my dreams!

I'm a keep it real: I love myself only because there could never be anybody else exactly like me, and that makes me happy. It sets my spirit free — though my thoughts will never have freedom because they're trapped either in my mind or between the lines of this sheet of paper! All I'm saying is: There are better things in life than merely material things. We could have anything we want! All you gotta do is dream — dreams are the most powerful thing because, no matter where you are, once them eyes close, imagination is set free!

The one thing we are all afraid of, is being alone, but that's when your mind takes over and fills you with fear, because the mind is essentially a prisoner of time. Yet the truth is that you'll never be alone if you can only remember you are essentially your soul's search for love — and love is everything! It's a feeling you can't explain but you can experience. I know that I'll find my love somehow! I believe in love! Do you? Anyways, I'ma leave y'all with this: The heart asks questions, and when it does, the answers come sooner or later.

It's ya boy like always, and I care less about a hater. I don't listen, brotha. It makes sense. I love you, lil sis'. And I thank you all for reading this. It's the best you can hear from me, and I'll be the best hearing from ya'll. Ya know y'all gon' see me on TV one day, but until then, I'm a useless face but a well-seeing heart! It's ya boy! Oh yeah, The Beat went bad and put my lil' picture of that lil' boy raising his hand, and my poem was supposed to be by it. But it's good.

-Lil' Mainy the Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We crown you if not yet a Philosopher King, certainly the Philosopher Prince of The Beat Within. This is as deep an exposition on the transcendent (mystical, eternal) power of love over the transient power of the temporal mind, as we have read. What an admirable analysis of two types of love, one real and true, the other manipulative and false; one born of the free-play of the heart's essential nature and the other, a wounded mind's confusion of the need to be loved with the power to love, even the confusion of manipulative power over another lover with loving another and loving oneself. We could go on and on, but you've offered a plethora of insights that renders our response redundant. For those who are able to follow and penetrate your meaning, may they receive a thousand blessings. Yes, we, too, believe in love, what has come to be called "unconditional love" — giving without thought of receiving, for therein lies the mind's distorting power and influence, in the expectation that fills the gap between giving and receiving. Rather, love which lives essentially beyond time realizes no gap can exist, for the search for love in time and the infinite eternal power of love are one from the soul's point of view. Faith, as it were, fills the apparent gap, but in truth the gap is only a transient apparition in time, onto which the mind seizes in its panic and fury to manage reality in time. Love knows better, and in giving, receives, past doubt; in searching, finds, beyond the punishing slavery of fearful mind — for without heart, even so-called love is but another form of serving time. Major props to the Young Prince of Freedom. We value your words whenever we see them.

Staff just told the unit about two previous inmates
that are at war with one another. And one of them
happens to be a close friend to me. They're trying to
take one another out of this world.

Who Am I?

i may be a lil' ninja
but i got enough heart to take out a big ninja
used to be a little angel and a dedicated athlete
until i got distracted and side-tracked and pulled into
the streets
forgot about everything and was just focused on
money
getting high and poppin' pills with ninjas i thought
were my ninjas just to feel good
staying out until there is no traffic on the street
footin' around south berkeley and around my waist
lies the heat
with the bewilderment in my head
waking up never being happy
daring my freedom with every step i take
always in a rush chasing after every dollar
pondering and awaiting my time to shine
thinking to myself one day i'll get right but now
knowing when
no respect for anyone else
digging a hole on it's way to a ditch for myself
spending money to make money
sometimes i didn't break even
so inarticulate i never asked for help
so blind that being held captive in a detention center
never crossed my mind
who am i —
i don't know yet but i'm on a journey seeking my
question
i have been representing them more than
i have been representing myself and my family
searching for myself is like being lost
in the middle of the ocean seeking land
the mischievous streets have deceived me
my impatience has got me
left in a chamber of solitude and in a trance
so many surprises are awaiting me down my path
who knows if i will stay free or see
the youth authority or the penitentiary
a wise lady before said that we
should have a plan when we leave
i have a goal and plan in my mind
but not every plan works one hundred per cent
i want to restore my determination
but i'm just sayin' though
shhh happens

-Lil' Toot, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've been through it, and you're no less a victim because you were foolish enough to choose it. Now you know better than you did before, and "inarticulate" is what you are not any longer — that's for sure! And yeah, it's guaranteed that shhh happens. As a matter of fact, you'll probably at one time or another face difficulties doing right, every bit as difficult as the ones you faced doing wrong. But you will build that determination day by day, as you practice living your life a new (or renewed) way. Keep it simple, just keep doing the next right thing. Don't look too far ahead. Then one day, you'll look back and see, instead of slipping back, you've moved forward with your life successfully. That's when you're confidence in yourself will be fully restored — 'cause you'll see the proof in all you do. And if you slip, just get back up, get a grip, and return to doing right.

Black Catastrophe

What does this title mean? I'm talking about the struggle, the anguish that is detaining us from transcending. I'm in my chamber right now, left in a trance. Staff just told the unit about two previous inmates that are at war with one another. And one of them happens to be a close friend to me. They're trying to take one another out of this world. The enmity we have is so grotesque. I just hope my ninja don't slip up and stays on his toes.

But this type of conflict is going on in every city and every block. And it's common also. It seems like we are all going to eradicate ourselves if the murder rate keeps ascending. It gets worse every year. I don't know why. You can lose your life out here for a dollar bill — that's how grimy the streets is! And ninjas like to brag about this catastrophe. I don't see how one can brag about ninjas getting pierced and killed by bullets! I can't see how one could brag about they' momma being coked out. Or ninjas bragging about they' arsenal (stock of weapons). And ninjas bragging about selling drugs. To me this ain't nothin' to have pride about. Ninjas should do what they got to do to survive, but if you' an outlaw-type ninja — please don't brag about it! This type of behavior is how we get confined from the better things in life.

These gruesome streets are getting outrageous. Ninjas don't even believe in school no more. After how our ancestors put up huge fights and lost lives just for us to get an education and just to learn to read. All of that drama for nothing now. It's eff'd up! Ninjas don't even go to school to learn. Some just go to see or talk to some female; and some just go just to get high; and others go to make money. Very few go to learn and benefit from it. A pencil in your hand is worth more then a bundle in your hand, and that's straight up! Education is the strongest weapon. But y'all can't see it.

-Lil' Toot, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Every so often someone comes to the Hall who uses the time here to actually think things through, and there is no better example of this admirable phenomenon than you! We don't know what makes the difference, why one person is able to see through the horror in our streets and begin to separate himself from his part in the insanity that perpetuates it. We certainly don't blame it all on the youngsters going to second-rate underfunded urban schools. The whole idea of integrating schools was to get black children a shot at an education of high standards equal to the more privileged (group as a whole) white children in the South. But just look at how segregated by income and neighborhood our schools are today — and poor cities like Oakland have second-rate schools compared to, say, Walnut Creek or whatever suburban white-flight city you might choose to compare it to. Still, the will to overcome this injustice must come from the victims of that injustice, and being all about the money is fine as long as it's not just a slogan to indulge in parasitic crime but represents a demand for equal education and equal economic opportunity. In that sense, MLK just before he passed away (was murdered, that is) was "all about the money." Well, we stray from our intent which is to offer you our highest compliments for your responsible intelligence and beneficial social intent.



Come Take A Walk In My Shoes

Come take a walk in my shoes
 Come see what I see
 In my eyes what I see is hell
 I see babies crying, violence, hustlers on the block
 Selling rocks, crack heads stealing
 Just to get another shot
 Young girls — barely teens — prostituting
 Just to make ends meet
 Young boys getting killed
 Just 'cause they in the beef
 Keep walkin' in my shoes
 You'll be smokin' weed all day
 Poppin' pills like it the thing to do
 Then you'll be robbin' anybody that come to yo' 'hood
 Then you'll get caught an' spend two months in juvie
 The you get out an' do the same thing
 This time you do a lil' more
 You on probation
 You don't care so you go get a gun
 An' you in deep
 Then you get caught
 This time you don't go home...
 You go to a group home for three months
 Now you do something you never really do:
 You pray
 You ask God for your months to go by quick

Now I threw those old shoes away
 And bought a new pair
 This time this will change
 So if I was you, I wouldn't buy those shoes

-Nuke, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: You took us on a real walk in those old shoes you used to wear, didn't you? If you truly follow your own words and "change shoes," then we guess that those prayers paid off. Now it's up to you where those new shoes will take you.

Four walls is what you'd see if you'd look
 through my eyes. Tears at night,
 smile during the day.

Lookin' Out My Cell Window

Tan "n" light green is all I see
 It's a couple of real ninjas but it's hella wanna b's
 Fake ninjas an' real G's
 I'm lookin out my window wishin' I was freaking free
 Bein' in jail is not the life I chose for me
 I guess it's the odds that I never considered to bet
 But this is one of the consequences of livin' by the streets
 Before I let ya go
 I want to let you know
 It takes a real man to stand on his own
 And his own two feet
 But what can you do when you six feet deep
 Nothin'
 Mama I mean what I say
 An' I say what I mean
 This is my flow
 An' this is what I see when I look out my window

-Jay Nicc B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Jay, what do you mean this is not the life you chose? Your flow speaks of your regrets, or at least that's how we read it. However, you must know that you led yourself into this lifestyle and the consequences you are facing. So, in that sense, you did choose it. Now, what are you going to change about your choices so that you don't choose it again?

In My Shoes

People, my childhood you'd never understand.
 I used to wake up and take the cash from a one night stand.
 Trapped in the ghetto not knowin' which way to go
 They said a ninja wouldn't make it to see 24
 But screw that, me and mama are barely getting by.
 Got me stressing at an early age getting high,
 The older gees from the set were my role models.
 They play with good shhh, "k's" will leave your chest hollow
 Who want a job, I want to hang out with the mob
 Ninjas smoke Swishas, bust bees, man, and rob ninjas
 I never made it through school what the hell for when I'm
 out makin' gees
 By the corner store where lil' d did it
 I keep it real I don't talk about fake shhh
 It's California man!

-Nino, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're telling true tales of struggling on the streets, in a town with poverty and violence. Where positive role models are nowhere to be found. Nino, we want you to know that we see more in you than this baby gangsta with a frown. You don't have to accept things the way they are. You can get a job, do well and like it - if you have the courage to make the choice. It won't be easy, but we know there's a soul in you that wants to try. Believe in yourself, because we do.

Walking A Mile In My Shoes

Walking a mile in my shoes isn't hard. You'd have to be mentally tough though. To walk a day in my shoes is hell at times and heaven most. Smokin' weed and chillin' all day is what I do.

I used to play varsity basketball. I used to get good grades. I used to do a lot of things. Ambition drained day in and day out. Smokin' weed, drinking, cigarettes... it all comes with a price.

Four walls is what you'd see if you'd look through my eyes. Tears at night, smile during the day.

-Shawnte, 150 CRew

From The Beat: Funny how things like smoking and drinking can suck the ambition right out of us. It sounds like you were on a positive track and got distracted...your shoes have traveled a rough road, but we think you can redirect if you want to. What are your plans when you get out?

Every Day

every day people die
 every day we hear them cries
 tragedy, destruction, lies
 things happen so fast
 ninjas' first option is to blast
 we just in a movie, all of us a cast
 every city, every hood
 representin', thinkin' it's all good
 in reality i wish i could
 stop all these horrible things
 wish we could all be angels, have wings
 but reality hits and it hurts, stings
 it's just an everyday
 no matter where you live, in or out the bay
 just hope you realize what i have to say

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You put the cruel truth into words, and, yeah, it hurts, but pretending it isn't the way it is — will only make matters worse. We all have to face these hard facts before we can learn how to change the way thugs choose to act. The prisons are fillin' with folks proud to call themselves villains, so threats of punishment won't help them make better decisions. It needs to be a positive path, freely chosen, 'cause only free men can fix what's broken in a young thug's heart. Free yourself and you've made a start. We don't need angels if men do their part.

Walkin' A Mile In My Shoes

If you were to walk in my shoes, you'll see many faces you seen around the city that is respected. Also you will experiment with much marijuana and Swisher Sweet blunts. You would encounter many girls and women — some friends and some are more than friends.

Most of the time you spent would be outside trying to get money as much as you can in that day! You also hang around a group of people who like to make drama and money also. You also see lots of cars, some luxury, some sports, some SUV and some buckets.

You would also see police cars trying to patrol the neighborhood — also trying to harass many people. But when they try to harass me my shoes move fast because I'm running. Sometimes you would hear gunshots — sometimes it's close, sometimes it's far away

The air you would smell either of marijuana (weed) or food. Also you would see food places and business places. When the night come, you either are in the house our outside, but out you got to be on your Ps and Qs. Always consider God and take responsible choices, like when you do something prepare for the consequences.

-S B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It sure sounds like you live your life on the edge, meaning at any minute you could fall off the edge and land yourself somewhere you don't want to be. Unless you like the way you are living right now and the consequences that come with this lifestyle, you'd better find a way to walk a different path. Otherwise, your future is very predictable.

A Letter To Kanye

Dear Kanye,

You seem to know so much about so many things. I need to ask you something though... What do we do when it all fall down? I mean, I heard nobody's perfect, but if Jesus walks, what faults could He possibly have? Oh, and it ain't fair how the most religious, healthiest people got a lifespan of 90 years, but soulless diamonds are forever.

Does that mean I gotta buy my life? I mean, I never was a gold digger, but there ain't no telling what a girl would do under pressure... I know we're all self-conscious. Thanks for bein' the first to admit it... I mean, I know not everything I do is for the right reasons, but you never hear me say it more than once.

I guess I gotta think my life all over, come up with a new work out plan. By the way, I heard yours works pretty well... I'll do whatever it takes. I'll swim across the ocean, go through the wire, I think I answered my own question... when it all falls down, just pick it up!!

-Melissa GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We really like this letter to Kanye, Melissa, but you'll have to write another one to tell us why you think Kanye has the answers to your questions. What specific song or rap of his makes you put your question to him, in particular? Is he your favorite rap artist? Why? Even though we don't understand why you asked Kanye this question, the thing we really like about this piece is that you wrote yourself into an answer, which means that by the process of writing, you focused your own thoughts and reasoning, and realized you didn't need someone else to tell you what you already know. Good for you! (But we want to know a lot more about Kanye West, so please tell us.)

Dedicated to "Crystal Rose"

Damn, you were only 18

Tryin' to be the "FMD" queen

You were so young, had a beautiful face

At least you in a better place

I know it was hard for you in your struggles

But you know I'll always be with you through your troubles

And it's hard knowin' that you gone

But we're still tryin' hard to move on

You had one of the biggest loving hearts

Your brother is still takin' it hard

It's like he's fallin' apart

It's hard for him to get the facts that you're dead

But I still cry telling God it should've been me instead

And I still get visions of you alive in my head

And I know that your sister is going to miss your touch

Your whole family hurtin' because we loved you so much

As for me, I'm still in denial

Just the other day, I was watching you smile

Damn, all this seems so fake

Just the other day we were chillin' at the lake

But I still ask God why it was your life He had to take

Why'd He have to take you from your family?

Cause I still wake up cryin', sayin' "this can't be"

I guess all I can do is ask you to say "Hi" to my older brother

And you'll always be loved and missed like no other

"FMD" = Fort McDowell

-Marcus, SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: What a beautiful memorial to "Crystal Rose". It hurts tremendously to lose someone we deeply love. This piece powerfully captures the fullness of the grief process. When someone close to us passes away, we all go through stages of grief. Anger that the person has left us....Denial where we may not be able to believe that the person is gone....Bargaining where we make secret deals to be better or give something up if only the person could come back....Depression where we feel deeply sad and may want to give up.... and finally Acceptance where we begin to accept that the person is gone. All these feelings are normal. Grief is a process that takes time to pass through. We will never forget the person we grieve for. They will always live in our hearts and memories.

I guess I gotta think my life all over,
come up with a new work out plan.

Squires At The Ranch

Yeah, 'bout the Squires thing

I'm mad, 'cause it got taken away

Not sayin' a God damn thing

Not even tellin' us why

Just hearing people say, "It's just negative"

Tellin' us we ain't learnin' nothin'

But, see, to me, it was positive

'Cause I did learn something

I learned that it has to start wit' me

'Cause if I do it for someone else

Then, what if they're gone

Then who will I do it for?

The answer is me

Mr. Heinz told me that we learn from repetition

We might already know what they talkin' 'bout

But it might take a stranger

To tell you the same thing

That your family or close friend told you

For you to get the message

And remember this

You'll always learn from someone or something

No matter how bad the situation is

-Ngo LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Mr. Heinz and Jack Jacqua of Squires are very wise, Ngo, and so are you! Our executive editor at Pacific News Service, the parent of The Beat Within, once said that she expects everyone she meets to change her life, which is much like your message. We hope the beautiful poem you've written in support of Squires helps to keep it going down at the Ranch. Squires is a terrific program! Regardless, use the elders, Jack and Mr. Heinz, in your life to better your life!

Friends Or Lovers (Part 1)

I think I've fallen for a young Black man, 21 years, brown eyes, juicy lips, and the smoothest chocolate skin. I've had him between my sheets many nights through my dreams and fantasies and visions.

I thought, yes he had the looks, but what kind of mind did he possess? What kind of visions? Was he articulate? Could he read? Could he write? You may think it's a little extreme to ask these kinds of questions but with our Black men in society today you may never know. So me being me, I had to approach him in a way that would test his mind. So I casually asked him one day, "Did you know Rosa Parks died?" The next thing I know he's going on and on about the civil rights movement and his words flowed so well together and I could tell he had a strong mind. In short he passed. And now I was ready to make my move.

I said, "I'm highly attracted to you, I respect your mind and your way of thinking. Besides, I think you're beautiful, your lips, your eyes, your spirit. I want to be around you, be with you, I want to talk to you, I want..." As my heart began to flutter my words faded away and I could speak no more.

He said, "Your kind of young, I'm not sure you could satisfy mentally, spiritually, or sexually." If I felt I was inadequate about something, "...could you help me, I don't think your mind is at that stage just yet. I just got out of a relationship with a good woman and I don't want to jump into anything."

I told him that, a good woman should know how to make her man feel good and special so that he may overcome any inadequacies. And that is what I am, a good woman, and that is what I want to be, your good woman. He said, considering he just got out of a relationship he would need time to think. I let it go for the moment.

As the days went by, he seemed to be the only thing on my mind. Who was this man that he had so successfully intrigued me? Who was this man I was so skeptical about but was now mentally entrapped by? Why did he occupy

so much of my thoughts? Of one thing I was sure, he was brilliant and I'd never met anyone like him. The endless knowledge that flowed from his deep mind had seduced and I was addicted. This was new for me. No boredom, no repetition, and a feeling far more powerful than simple sexual attraction. He attracted me more with his mind than with his body, more with his soul than his handsome looks. Yet, he was still not ready. So we remained friends quite some time, over a year.

Every time we were apart, I couldn't wait until we were together again. For he was the only man who could provide me with an intellectual conversation. What could I do to draw him closer to me? What could I do to grab his attention and make him understand that I loved him, I needed him and the plain fact was that over the last year he had become a part of me, a part of me that I never wanted to sacrifice or give up. A year and a half into our friendship, I thought I would try again. But I didn't know if I should risk it. Should I sacrifice a good friendship and try to make something more or should I keep it the way it is and have a friend forever. I sat up all night trying to get my head together wondering if I should make a move or not. Should I or shouldn't I? Would I or wouldn't I? Should I risk it or stay the safe route? I fell asleep to the music of these thoughts.

I awoke startled by a banging at my door, it sounded like the police. I looked through the peephole and saw him standing there, looking as though he hadn't slept for days. He had tears in his eyes and said, "Please open up we need to talk." I let him in wondering to what did I owe the pleasure? I was opening my mouth to speak, but he stopped me and kissed me full on the lips, taking every breath in my body, every breath in my soul. He slowly pulled away looking me deep into my eyes and said, "_____". To Be Continued

-Ri-Ri, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Ri-Ri, you got us! What did he say? Is this relationship going to work out? Was he in tears because he couldn't hold back his feelings anymore? Did something horrible happen? What? What? Whaaaaaat? We will just have to be patient and wait for part 2. But, hurry up. Great story, well written piece of work!

Rough times just seem to shadow me Just chasing me through life

A Short Walk In My Shoes

A walk in my shoes? It could be a short walk, 'cause you can jus' walk around the corner and hear gun shots and you run — and you might just run right into a bullet! In the streets of Oakland you got to stay out the way, 'cause you can just walk down the street and you might smell a dead body and won't know what it is you' smelling.

It's knocks everywhere collecting cans; and it's drugs dealers, guns, rippers, everywhere! Ninjas off bottles, robo', and purple, and pills. Not even a half a mile, and you can see all this. So many people be on one corner, police don't be stoppin' unless their car is four deep. Ninjas be on the dime, in trees wit' chops waitin' fo' people to try to do a drive-by.

And it's sad that I got to go around the corner and see a cross-town ninja laying the middle of the street. And it goes on again! 'Cause now we drinkin' fo' they ninja that jus' got killed; and they want to kill the person who did it — so they go pop a pill, so they can kill!

-Lil' Webbie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That short walk you just took us on, is horrifying. 'cause the faces that end up leaking in the street are the faces we see each week writing for The Beat; 'cause it's not just one part of Oakland, not just the East Bay, not just the Bay, not just Cali, not just America — this ghetto, drug, gang/turf violence is epidemic in these first few years of the 21st Century. Money, drugs and guns, plus poverty and youth, is a volatile combination. If you can't change your 'hood, you can change yourself before you either die young or grow old on lock up. Great piece this week!

Let Me Out!

I wanna go home to my family
But they just won't let me
I won't go back to the streets
'cause they'll just arrest me!

I'm a Mexican girl just trying to live
Above the influence of others
'Cause I'm just another teenage girl
Who didn't get to know her mother

Abandoned at the age of one
With only her father to turn to
Living a skeptic life
When rough just blew through

Rough times just seem to shadow me
Just chasing me through life
Making me just wonder
Why I go through all this strife

-Ck Baby, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's so hard to work through a childhood full of sadness—some people live their whole lives feeling that pain. It seems like you are ahead of many adults with experiences like yours—you're recognizing the source of your hurt. If you keep working it out, through writing or talking or thinking—whatever works for you—you can get to a place of relative peace. We send you good thoughts.

RIP Miguel

The saddest thing I own is my RIP Miguel shirt. Miguel was hit and killed by a truck about two years ago. Miguel was a good friend of mine. We were both from Berkeley. Miguel was about seventeen when he died. He was a good kid. When Miguel died I started hanging out with his little brother. His little brother who attends the same middle school I went to. When Miguel died he was in the process of leaving the street gang and turning his life around. That shirt is the saddest thing I own.

-Brandon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a tragedy that the accident happened just as he was turning his life around. We hope you will carry on his legacy by turning your own life to the positive, and leading his little brother with you - he needs a mentor to replace his big brother. We're so proud you've stepped into those shoes!

Walking A Hard Mile In My Shoes

If you were walking in my shoes, it would be hard on you. Growing up, my mom and dad fought all the time in front of me, so I seen a lot of violence in my family. Then, to top it off, when I started school I went to a ghetto school, and the teachers couldn't teach well because there were so many other kids fighting or not wanting to learn. So a lot of the teachers were quitting. So we had times when we had to wait for new teachers. So I got use to not wanting to be at school.

Plus when I was out on the streets, it was bad. My mom or dad didn't know that all the times I seen them fight, that I had a lot of anger that I was keeping inside. So I fought a lot when I was at school when somebody made me mad. Then, on the street, older people on my block had me watching out and selling drugs for them, and they were paying me for it. Then I started selling them on my own thinking. It was the only way to make money. So, from then on, I had a messed-up mind. I always thought of bad things to do to make me feel better, and I was hanging with the people that were grinding and robbing people, stealing cars — and I thought they were the people to be with.

Then as I got a little bit older, I calmed down just a little, because I started smoking, and it make me forget all my problems while I had my high. But when it went down, I started thinking about what crazy things I could get into. But since I've been in here, I've had nothing but time to think about what's really important to me. So when I get out, I'm on a whole different page! But take a look at some of my life.

-Kionte, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You put the words on the page and took us for a long walk in your shoes from an early age straight up till today. You help us see how easily you can choose the wrong path when you come from a family full of rage and wrath, that has you spilling over with the same pain and anger till you put yourself in danger for the sake of a stranger who promises you some cash. And that cash in the pocket started buying you the weed that helped you slow your speed, till you actually began to see that there are others way to be — but when you'd run out, you'd be all about getting more money. Now, having lost your freedom, you're looking back on your life and seeing that somehow through all the wrong moves, you've brought yourself to this point in your life where you can choose how to be and what to do so you can be happy, joyous and free to be a new you!

when I was out on the streets, it was bad. My mom or dad didn't know that all the times I seen them fight, that I had a lot of anger that I was keeping inside.

From a Brother to a Sister

we carry the same blood
we came out the same womb
we've got whoopin's together
we've laughed and cried together
we've had our ups and downs with each other
i apologize and regret when i hurt you physically and mentally

you be callin' me a hater
i guess it's tough brother-love
i've watched you grow into a beautiful young girl
a guy would be the luckiest person on earth to have you
i remember when you used to have one eyebrow
now look at you

light skin, long pretty hair, and a body to top it all
you are the perfect combination for a girl
i don't want to see you get hurt by anybody physically or mentally

i would die for you if i had to
if a guy was to hurt you i would be infuriated enough to take his life

you, momma, and bre-bre, are my soft spot
the three of you make my heart whole
it seems just like yesterday we used to
catch the bus on harmon street to go to emerson
now you hog the bathroom and attend the same high school as me

you can ask me for any advice on guys or anything else
i want us to be tight like that
i would love to see you as a doctor or a lawyer
there aren't too many good-lookin' women that can fill that position

the prettiest girls are always brought down
maybe because of all the attention they receive
you are my sister
you were raised by a mother who walked through a firestorm

to get to where she is today
you three beautiful females are all i got
and all i need to keep me motivated
love and respect momma
respect your mind and body
and most importantly respect and accept yourself
my love for you transcends everything and anything
miss you and good night

-Lil' Toot, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's a beautiful, thoughtful and compassionate poem, except for that part where your murderous rage comes on — as if that were an expression of love! If someone hurt your sister and you killed that person, you sister would lose a brother to the pen and never be able to process that pain she felt within 'cause a whole other pain would have her heart and mind crying. We wondered why someone who could write with such tenderness, kept bringing himself back to this mess — you've still got to do some analysis of those feelings in your chest, 'cause some are lit by truth, others by delusion and confusion, nothing less.

Step By Step

one step at a time
step by step
closer to freedom
one day at a time
thirty days
that is one step
to freedom
and when you
get out — stop
the violence.

-Man-Man, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You say in a few words what we all need to know, ya heard! "Just for today, I will do what's right."

A Positive Message To "My People"

If I had a chance to talk to "my people" or deliver a message, I would do so, and it would be a positive one at that. What I mean by "my people" is not just Latinos, but minorities altogether. I was goin' into this thinkin' about it, and I decided to write 'bout minorities: Blacks, Asians, Latinos, etc. We all share one same struggle; surviving as the underdogs.

We, minorities, are and will always be underdogs. A lot of times we are put into situations where we are meant to fail, and we have to overcome. Looking at all of my fellow inmates, I realize we are all minorities in here. They system is built for us, but we all got to stop comin' in here. We have to stop committing crimes and being in a position to fail.

Stop all this Black on Black, Latino on Latino, Asian on Asian crimes. That's what they want, to let "us" (their enemy, as they see us) eliminate ourselves. They don't want to see a minority who has power! They are scared of that. Well, I say let's put fear into them by showing them that we are not failures, that we can succeed! A lot of minorities have overcome in the struggle, and let's all continue. We also have one unique advantage in that no one expects us to survive. So, that means we only got one way to go, and that's up! If we work together as one, as a whole, we can rise and overcome.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your powerful words of inspiration, rising from facing the hard truths of your situation, will find more than a few reading our pages who are willing to listen to you. Joining arms across racial and cultural boundaries right here in a lock-up facility, uniting to support each other because you have so much common as incarcerated detainees in the juvenile system, would go a long way to changing the outside world, too. Yet as you point out, so much of the violence against minorities is intra-racial: black on black, brown on brown, yellow on yellow. We've raised this as a topic often in The Beat: What is the reason for this madness? What can be done to stop it? To be sure, it will have to start with strong voices like your own, speaking out against the violence and division. Underdogs of the world unite to fight the good fight — not with guns killing fathers and sons of your own, but with role models going full throttle to bring success home to the hood, for your neighbor and yourself — all good!

Becoming A Man

It is what it is but I make it what it be...

Today is my birthday

It's one of them days

That's in a worst way

I'm in the halls

But I'm not gon stay

"N" now it not time ta play

If you don't know me my name is Jay Nicc

I could be sick

But I choose not to pick

If you known me

You know my flows make sense

It's either go to the Ranch or hop on the plane

Either way I'm lookin' for change in me

I'm tired of blaming people for my mistakes, ya see

Today I'm 18 and no longer a teen.

-Jay Nicc B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We're sure that many people contributed to the life path you're on, but we applaud your determination to stop pointing fingers and start making the changes you need to make from the inside. You prove with this piece that in your case, reaching the age of 18 (happy birthday!) is the same as reaching past childhood and into adulthood. Taking responsibility is scary, but it's also thrilling. Do the program you must do, learn what you need to learn, then resume your life on a new and better path.

Stop all this Black on Black, Latino on Latino, Asian on Asian crimes. That's what they want, to let "us" (their enemy, as they see us) eliminate ourselves

Thankful For My Past

I often hear people say, "I wish I could change my life;" or, "I wish I could start over." Well, I feel quite the opposite. I don't want a new life or a chance to start over. I'm thankful for the things I've gone through, the good choices as well as the bad.

Well, soon after I was born, I was taken from my mom because she was a drug addict — most female parents where I'm from, were addicted in the 80's. I was then put up for adoption. My great aunt ended up getting me, and a year later getting my sis' for the same reason. She raised both of us in a church and tried her best to give us the best of everything.

My eight cousins ended up moving in and exposing me to a whole other life. I began to smoke at age eight, and ran away at ten. They taught me to steal cars at the age of twelve, and then how to sell for them to make money. I ended up in group homes.

Fortunately, it was a church on the corner, and I was allowed to go in as I pleased. At thirteen, I began to teach myself how to play the organ. I already knew how to play the drums; plus music is a family trait, so it came easily. I started to play for the church and then for others. However, I still was into the stolen car business, especially after finding chop shops, which in turn allowed me to make hecka money. Therefore, I ended up getting sent to a number of different group homes. Normally that would be a bad thing, but it helped me in the long run.

I decided on January 19, 2005, to change my life. I got a normal (legal) job, got into a program called ILSP, and got into transitional housing. Later in the year, I got an apartment. I got way better on the organ, too, and began to make beaucoup ("buckkoo") money playing. Yet I was still smoking and fornicating and, basically, sinning. God allowed me to get caught up on with another stolo, which ended me up here.

But this is not a bad thing — it's a stepping stone, a chance God gave me to stop straddling the fence, a chance to get right with Him. My whole past helped me get to this point, and what's good about it all, is that I'm not mad. I'm thankful for my past.

-T-Bone, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That attitude of gratitude will take you far, if you can stay clean and stop returning to the temptation of that criminal scene — one can be addicted to "fast money" as surely as a crackhead is addicted to rock. Your faith in God can help you, so long as you pray as if everything depends on God and act as if everything depends on you! And don't give up on yourself because you are guaranteed to fall short of perfection — look for progress not perfection and just keep yourself headed in the right direction. Now you know it isn't all about the money, not even making it legally, 'cause if you keep that criminal mentality, then your legal job is just a "front". Jesus said that the hypocrite washes the outside of the cup but never cleans the filth within. Remember, do right is an inside job. We know you can talk the talk, and The Beat thanks you for sharing that gift with our readers — but it's all on you, to walk the walk. If you've turned you mistakes and misfortunes into lessons learned, then you're right, you've turned your past into a good thing — and your good deeds now and in the future, are the proof. Just keep doing the next right thing, and your story will have a happy ending.

I Ain't Mad At Me

expelled from school at the last minute
 can't attend the prom
 can't walk the stage for my momma
 listening to the agonizing voice of my mother
 makes me feel as if all is despair
 held captive in a detention center
 if only i could have prevented my atrocious behavior
 if only i could sort and assert my thoughts
 then my mother wouldn't be in the bleak state she is
 in now
 my momma told me my conspicuous behavior
 would have me in a place like this
 my actions have deceived me
 i was reacting before thinking
 which has confined me from the outside
 my dad always told me i would learn the hard way
 from now and on i will comply with my momma's rules
 i ain't mad at me
 mistakes are for one to learn from
 i won't be captive for long
 one day i will see the sun
 and be able to do as i please
 everything happens for a reason
 i have to modify myself for the better
 everybody keep your head up
 the more pain the more gain
 if you can't respect it then forget your life

-Lil' Toot, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're right not to be mad at yourself, but when you say everything happens for a reason — it's still on you to provide that reason with the positive changes you claim you will make in this poem. In retrospect then, this youthful disaster will become the turning point that set you on track to the success you are certain to find if you choose to comply with your momma's rules and stop acting a fool. Of course, it's deeper than rules — it's choosing to do what's right and good even if there is no generally understood rule. And once you'll learned that, then doing as you please will help keep you free rather than freedom at risk as well as your life. You were deceived but now you perceive the truth. So let your life become the living proof that you can turn your pain to gain, for yourself, you family and your community, too.

Money

Life without money
 Ain't never been funny
 But if I get too broke
 I could get me a snow bunny
 And put her on the track,
 But I choose not to do that
 'Cause I'm better than that
 If there was no money in this world
 I would have to choose...
 Should I sell dope
 To somebody's momma
 Or pull out a strap
 And start some drama
 By robbin' somebody
 But that ain't coo',
 So I'ma do the right
 Thing and go to school!

-Lil' Baby GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: That is a great end to your poem, especially if it is really what you plan to do. Since we've been through school, we know how boring it can be sometimes, and how you have to make yourself go even when you don't want to. But we've also learned that your education is the key to every other success in your life, so we applaud your decision to go to school, and we hope you honor it.

Message To My People

message to my people
 days are going by
 and we are getting older
 times are changing
 things are getting hard
 kids are with no father
 all of our brothers are dying
 brothers are getting dumb
 mothers are still wondering
 kids don't go to school
 and cops don't play by the rules
 sick's are still sicking
 and you are catching cases
 your girl is all alone
 trying to call your best friend to bone
 hurt, our generation is failing
 a new up-bringing has come
 first in and out of foster homes
 then you're in and out of group homes
 then juvie
 then you're in and out
 of the pen'

-Weathersby, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This poem is a howl of pain, distress and hopelessness, and there is a message in that, too. But what are you going to do, personally, to break the cycle has brought such misery into your life. Each one, teach one, and perhaps a new change will be begun — 'cause we've all had enough of this old one!

brothers are getting dumb
 mothers are still wondering
 kids don't go to school
 and cops don't play by the rules

Being With My Son

The best summer I ever had was last year because that was when I went swimming for the first time with my son and girlfriend.

We bought a floating thing where we could sit and just float. I would go under and pop up and he would look at me and just stare. Then me and my girlfriend would push him around the pool. He was scared at first but then he started to like it. He was about 7 or 8 months. Like a month later he started to walk at about 9 months.

Me and my girlfriend did lots of stuff with our son that summer. Me and my girlfriend would go to the stores and buy shoes and clothes for our baby. The best thing about that summer was spending time with my girlfriend and my son. That was the first summer we spent together.

-Ismael, 150 Crew

From The Beat: These amazing pieces you write about your son each week are something we really hope you cut out and save. Think what they'll mean to him to read when he's older, when he sees these memories of how much he meant to you right from the start, how much love there was from day one. Who is taking care of him now? Does your girlfriend have help from your family? How old is he now? Tell us more... and, of course, since it's coming up in a few days: Happy Father's Day.

My Message

If I could really choose one thing to say to people or have them remember, I would tell them: "Stop. Sit down and think of the people that's MOST important in your life, and, please, CHERISH them as much as possible!" A lot of people really do take this for granted and end up regretting it.

The one thing I've learn while being locked up is that I regret not spending as much time with my family, because, in the end, they were always there to support me till the end — and I didn't realize how much I actually love and appreciate them!

So when I get out, I'm going to spend as much time with them as possible and stay out of trouble so they won't need to worry about me anymore. I'm going to do good in school, find a great job, and start taking care of them like they took care of me until now.

-David

From The Beat: So, it was you out there chasing money day and night instead of spending time with your family, and it got you locked up in a max unit. The best thing you can do is follow through on what you say you plan to do. You've learned a hard lesson — no do your do-right and things will start to getting bright, day by day. Change comes from the inside out, and we can see you're for real in changing what you're about.

It's Time

today we are going
 to talk about
 sending a message
 to our people
 men, it's time
 to wake up
 we out here killin'
 other brothers and sisters
 the town goin' bad
 what happened to the days
 when we had a black leader
 that was powerful
 today we don't have none
 it seems like all our black
 powerful people
 are in jail

-Cannon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It does seem that when the agenda turned from voting rights and bringing down segregation laws to economic empowerment, it got way harder for a black leader with controversial demands to stay both alive and powerful at the same time. Imagine how different it would be if MLK had lived.

It's the people who don't think
 money is everything that truly
 understand how to cherish the
 things that are most
 important to them.

What Is Money To You?

People only make money or strive to make money, because of one thing — to pursue happiness. Some people assume that money is everything, and some people think it's not really a big deal.

It's the people who don't think money is everything that truly understand how to cherish the things that are most important to them. People that think money is everything will just be so busy about making money or supporting their family, that they won't have the time to spend time with the ones they love! I think a lot of people take that for granted, until they realize it's too late.

-David, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There's a lot of wisdom in this short piece. But now we're not sure if you're talking about the father who is never home to show his children love and guidance, or the son (you?) who is out making money instead of home with his family. Either way, your message about getting so caught up in making money that you lose what's most valuable in life, rings true.



I'm Tired

I'm tired of being locked up. I wanna get out of here and be with my family. I regret what did to get in here. I wash I was with the females. I miss being around them, especially the ones that want to get with me or the ones that I miss.

I wanna be in my own bed in my own room. I miss my clothes. I also miss the people that love me. When I get out of here, I'm making sure that I never come back and I mean that. I just wish I could have thought differently to the problem that I had. I could have responded differently to what did. I should have put it in a adult's hand and let them handle it.

Damn! I miss everything. I think about a whole lot of shhh while I am in my room locked up. I think about girls I hurt in the past or did them wrong. I apologize for everything that I've done. God forgive me.

I'm hella tired of eating this nasty-ass food that they have here. I wanna eat some real food — the food that I eat when I am on the outs. I'm really thinking about apologizing to every woman that I hurt. A woman's heart is special. Women are sensitive. I'm gonna treat all women right.

Well Beat, I'm about to shake. Late.

-Billy B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We bet you're very respectful of women, and we think that is a very admirable quality in a man. If we disagree with you about anything, Billy, it is your belief that only women's hearts are special, and only women are sensitive. Our experience tells us that men's hearts are also special. Yours, for example, is exceedingly special! Of course, we agree with you 100% about this being a place to get out of and stay out of!

Making Decisions

Making decisions is hard when you have your whole family there doing what you are trying to walk away from! I have been to juvenile hall eleven times and I've been to six group homes, and that was because I made bad decisions — and I made bad decisions because of family and because of myself.

All I am saying is — you have to back away from that family member who is holding you back. I was in Right Of Passage, better known as ROP, and I only had a month left. But I made bad decisions, and I got caught with a dope case. I don't spend my time sitting here just wishing I did not do it — I just tell myself to learn from it.

So, for all you that sit and wish, just stop it, because wishing does not give you nothing but hopes and dreams. You have to get it! So for all you people that are weak-minded, you need to get up and make decisions — so that somebody else won't make them for you.

-Weathersby, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It is perhaps the hardest thing in the world to break away from making bad decisions when your family members keep doing it, whether it's parents, siblings or both, uncles and cousins, whatever. Just last week we talked to another Beat writer who came back because he made a bad decision, or, as you point out, he let someone else make a bad decision for him — his older brother. Now he, like you, has learned that he must separate the undying love for family from letting family make his decisions for him. Stay strong!

Worries

If I didn't have to worry 'bout money, I would make sure me and my family are living comfortably. I would stay out of jail and do the right thing — help people in need. The thing that I would probably worry about is love, making sure my heart is in the right place.

You can have all the money in the world, but it won't be the same if you ain't happy! I thought, when I was younger, that money brought happiness, but through experiences I've realized it doesn't. It's something deep — love, hate, happiness, etc. — and till emotions run deep inside you, you can be a really rich guy and if you're lonely, your life just won't feel right.

I would also worry about findin' myself and my purpose here in this world. What was I put here for? I'd do some real spiritual soul-searching type of stuff.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Starting from the end of your piece, in a way you're without money worries where you are right now, and you have plenty of time to do that soul-searching. But you know what? We believe that's exactly what you've been doing with your time here. So, we believe that's what you'd do out there, too, at least this new you would. And thanks for sharing that wisdom based on experience. It does look to youngsters, who feel so powerless, that the power of money will automatically bring happiness, but we all live and learn that it just ain't so. Self-respect, love and appreciation, peace of mind, even a clear conscience contribute mightily to happiness. Keep searching, 'cause you're on the road to being blessed with happiness.

... I realized that she was just trying
to help me, because no matter what,
my mom is going to love me always.

Fifteen times

Man, I been coming to Juvy since 2003, back when unit B was in B2! That was my first time ever coming here, where now some of my fellow inmates are homies facing some time in the pen' or YA. I look back, and back then it was some cool times I had, even though jail ain't fun.

I had a lot of fun times here, and some were bad. I've been to a group homes, and I ran from some and got T'd from some. I've never been to Camp and never had EM, home supe' or whatever. I ain't had serious cases, just dope cases. But don't get me wrong, 'cause I put it down where I'm from. I just thank God that I never got caught — but never say never! I got lucky at times.

I'm just surprised Judge K. ain't sent me to YA. I be like, "Damn! He going to the Y!" I be like, "Man, if I was to go, what would they say about me?" But it's a trip how different homies is different. Some would trip on you 'cause of how you act and so on. But I ain't got a lot of time left — so to all who being sent away for a minute, keep ya head up!

-Tui Tui, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We do indeed remember you from when you were in the "youngsters' unit" in Alameda County JH, and you wrote some pieces way back then that remain Beat classics! We're just sorry that you've not yet found a way out of the life style that still has you thanking God you didn't get caught. Just think of God as giving you one more chance to learn your lesson without having to learn it the hard way! 'Cause if you continue to refuse to learn it at all, it will get hard. Will you be blaming God then, even though you'd be bringing it on yourself. If you're really grateful to God, show your gratitude with a change of attitude.

Hurting Others

My mama been with me my whole life, but now she getting tired of me doing the same old bullshhh I been doing fo' the last few years. I don't blame her, you feel. She been trying to help me get out the game, but I never listened when she said that I was hanging with the wrong people, hanging in the wrong places, doing the wrong things.

I used to get mad when she told me that stuff, but later I realized that she was just trying to help me, because no matter what, my mom is going to love me always. I just feel bad because I made her stress fo' the bullshhh I have done. I have hurt her by being in the streets.

So you feel me? You ain't the only one going through this shhh. You dragging the people that love you with you.

-Enano B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Exactly! Looking at it this way, it is clear to see that you are maturing in the way you think. Just be sure to act just as you think. As a son, it is your job to be there to support your mom and make her proud of her baby that she has sacrificed so much for. Real love now requires that some of those sacrifices come from you.

My Time Is Coming . . .

my time is coming to get out of here
my time is coming to change my life
my time is coming to get through this strife
my time is coming to stop breaking the law
my time is coming to live life right
my time is coming to enjoy simple pleasures
and my time is coming to eat some real food and drink
sprite
my time is coming to live life on the outs
my time is coming to give my mom the respect she
wants from me my time is coming — to be free!

-R, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Judging from what you say in this poem, your time to be out there physically free is coming soon, but your time to get free mentally from the chains that were holding you down has already come — well done! Now live everyday the way you're thinking today.

Nowhere To Go

I can't think, 'cause I'm angry, because I'm scared
 If I had any, I would be ripping out my hair
 I have so much to think about—unbelievable stress
 I need to get some shhh up off my chest
 My grandmother's senile and she's wasting away
 Staying secluded in New Mexico, day after day
 I might not graduate; I need more credits
 I have horrible allergies and I need a medic
 I leave in two months with nowhere to go
 What I'll do for food, I don't even know
 Now these girls want to start relationships
 I don't need more responsibilities; flip a witch (turn around)
 I have deadlines for newsletters, HIV tests
 So much to think about—it's like a math test
 I'm trying to go to art school with a scholarship
 But it's so hard not to shut down real quick
 I have so much to do in so little time
 I have months of time, but none of it's mine!

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: It would be terrific if you could establish a home base so you could go to school, get that scholarship to art school, etc, Dominic. It sounds like you're doing your best to get your next life of freedom established before you get out! There's no reason why you can have some wonderful friendships in juvy—after all, there are many terrific young people up in there with you. Can you just enjoy everyone, and be friends, if you're not up to a romance? Are the counselors helping you find somewhere to live now, before you're ready to leave? Do you need to set up a job, get some work? Let the psych tec, the counselors up there know!

My Mom The Cook

I just miss being at home, just chillin' in my room, watching TV and just getting up and walking to my mom's room, jumping on my mom's bed, giving her a kiss on the kisser, and asking her what she gonna do for dinner, 'cause, damn, I love her food and just being at the dinner table wit' my family and eating my mama's good ass food and just thanking God for being wit' my family and for the food he is putting in my stomach. That's what I miss about home.

-Alexandro, Marin

From The Beat: Get back home! You can't beat a home cook meal and the love a mother gives. What are your plans upon going home and staying home for good?

What Exactly Do I Miss About Home?

What I miss about home is my car, clothes, shoes, gold teeth, cell phone, and my family, of course. I wish I was on the outs with my boys, havin' fun, goin' to parties and stuff—to the skatin' rink on Saturdays.

I also miss my girl on the outs, because we was with each other every day and night until the police came and got me and she was actually with me the night I got arrested.

I had a lot of fun on the outs, especially holidays, when my family gather together and my aunt cooks for da family.

I'm very materialistic, but I think if I was given the chance to give all that up for my freedom, I would, because none of that stuff could equal my freedom, so the day I get out of here, I'm thinkin' 'bout gon' to suits an' stuff, because it seems like the police stereotype people who dress like us.

-James, Marin

From The Beat: Time will tell how serious you truly are about your freedom. Take a good look at your self and think before you do something you will once again regret. Best of luck.

Unbelievable

These girls are playing with me, this I swear
 It's switching from dirty looks to sultry stares
 I don't understand the way these girls were brought up
 While I was taught "respect," they were learnin' "Don't give a ..."
 I tried being nice to them; I've tried poems
 But my niceness doesn't seem to get through their thick domes
 Maybe they're been hurt before and they're wary
 But I just want to be friends, not anything heavy to carry
 I think maybe I'll ignore them for a while
 Let them think they have hurt my style
 Well, I'm about done, so thanks for listening
 I'm yours for the taking, not for Christening

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: Well, stop! Not everybody wants to be your friend. Give them space and yes maybe in time you will have the opportunity to strike up a conversation. Remember, this is what makes the world so interesting, we are all so different, we all do not think alike! You know that!

Looking Out My Window

Outside my window
 I see mountains and trees
 Looking out my way
 Wishing that's the place
 Where I want to be at
 Sometimes I don't like to look out my window
 Because it makes me think
 Of the thing I did to get in here
 It makes me think of the things
 My mom told me not to do
 But I still did
 And told her to stop saying things
 I didn't want to hear

-Cuerve, Marin

From The Beat: Your honesty comes through loud and clear. We can truly relate to you having a hard time accepting your choices and the guilt that came from disobeying and not listening to those who love you. What's your plan upon leaving the Hall? Can you make the change for the better?

Love Comfort And Freedom

When I think about home, the first thing that comes to mind is love, comfort, and freedom to do the things I want to do. That is one privilege that I lack at MCJH.

There are so many things that I miss at home, every time I am here. Even the smallest things that sometimes I don't even pay attention to.

The biggest thing I miss is my little brother and sister. I miss their laughin', their smile, their cry, their scream, every little thing about them. Most of all, their hugs and kisses. Sometimes I will admit it hella annoys me, but now that I don't have it, I miss it.

I also miss my bed, my house, my mom land dad, and even my pets at home.

All the other things I wish I had right now are material and best believe I am one materialistic ass person. I'm talking about my Ipod, my TV, my makeup, my shoes, my Louis Vuitton purses, my clothes, but one thing that I realize is all of that stuff could be replaced. The one thing I miss most of all is my family.

-Careina, Marin

From The Beat: You say it so well in your piece and what you long for. Do not forget this period of your life and hopefully you won't find yourself in such a place ever again.

A Great Walk In My Shoes

My life is somewhat great. No, actually, it is okay. If you were to walk a mile in my shoes, you would be in for quite a walk.

If you were to live my life, you would be in Greenbrae, CA. You would have a big sister who gets everything she wants with a single demand, a little sister who looks up to you a lot, and a cute little brother who looks just like you, but acts completely different.

That's just the basic things! Your life would be surrounded by people who think you're a bully, though you're not. And you're often told that you are very smart—this encourages you a lot. Most of the time you feel alone, from your family. You wish you and your mom could spend more time, though you never get along. And your dad, whoa, let's not start with him!

Anyway, you absolutely love the touch of clean water, I mean, you bathe like people should brush their teeth—after every meal. You would be lactose intolerant, so stay away from dairy products!

Well, that's my life, well, our life, so have fun if you do decide to take a walk. Beware, 'cause I am a wild ride.

-Karea, Marin

From The Beat: You sound like you're very grateful for the family you have, but that you're lonely. If you would like to spend more time with your mom, can you maybe hold back when you two get into it, so being with you will be a pleasure for her? Maybe she'd like someone to talk to, confide in. Why don't you invite her for lunch, when you're free again? If things are awful with your dad, what can you do about it? Are things raggedy with your sisters and brothers, with your dad, too, or is it just you and he that are having problems? Do your sisters' lifestyles interest you? Do you ever hang with them? Talk/confide in them? We hope, when you're home again, you'll become closer to your family, even if it's on you right now to take most of the initiative.

Hard Times

Every time I turn around, it seems like somebody I knew die. Maybe it's me, or am I just tripping? But the things we young folks die for is stupid. Sometimes I think about believing in some kind of higher power, but the more I try, the more the people I hang with don't want to hear what I'm thinking about. People that kill and do drugs do it for a reason. The things I do most of the time I don't know what I did it for.

-Smacks B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is truly an interesting piece, Smacks. Do your friends' reactions make it harder for you to explore a belief in a higher power? Are you able to pursue your own ideas and thoughts wherever they may lead you, even if the people you hang with are not interested in hearing about them? The belief in a higher power is a very personal one, and we know some people who believe in a higher power and other people who do not who still live a good and decent life. Wherever your search takes you, we hope you start believing in yourself and your own abilities, because in the end, you have only yourself to rely on.

Life In The Halls

My name is Marques and if you had the charges I got, you wouldn't know what to do 'cause I don't even know. I been in here for 90 days today (4/2/06). I need to get the freak out of here because I'm missin' out on school. I'm going to school in here but I ain't getting nothing from it yet.

I took a test that everyone in school has to take and didn't know shhh on the test. I asked the teacher and she said it had nothing to do wit' her. So I said, "Then how am I going to get high S.A.T scores if you don't teach me the things on the test?" And she said, "I don't know".

So I'm trying to beat my charges and go home and when I get out I'm going to come see about a job at The Beat.

-Gbb B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Marques, we don't know what your charges are and we can't be in your shoes. However, there are people here at The Beat that have been through a lot more, facing a tremendous amount of time who have made it through and are succeeding in life. If they can do it, you can too. We'll look for you in The Beat office when you walk out of here.

¿Por Qué Te Fuistes?

Estoy en la cárcel del condado con toda mi maldita pason. Escribi tu nombre en la pared (Lisette) y me acuerdó de nuestro dulce pasado y me desespero con un gran remordimiento.

Muchos pensamiento quiero decirte aqui de mi corazón. No entiendo porque te quistaste la vida, no tiene razón. Bien sabías que nos tenías a nosotros que te querían con mucho amor. Como quisiera regresar el maldito tiempo y platicar contigo y estar contento. Son tiempos inesplicables e inolvidables. Como quisiera que eso no hubiera pasado.

Muchas personas pudieron ayudarte y no lo hicieron por tardados. Estas son las consecuencias por vivir en esta vida loca. Cuando tu fe es poca, el tiempo se acaba y cuando tu mente se desespera y se explota como una granada. Primero hay que mirar al cielo y con EL hablemos si esta vida merecemos. Te sigo mirando: Te repito: Que quisiera que eso no hubiera pasado. Rest in peace Nitza.

From The Beat: Sentimos mucho la perdida de tu amigo. Esperamos que Dios tenga piedad de esta persona. Desafortunadamente ya es muy tarde para remediar esto. A veces nosotros somos muy egoistas y no sabemos apreciar las cosas o gente hasta que las perdemos. ¿Te distes cuenta de esto? ¿Te ha enseñado esto en como valorar la vida un poco más? ¿Tratastes tú de ayudar a esta persona? Ahora hay que ver por tu vida, como llevarla mejor y mejorarla.

Why Did You Go?

I am in County jail with all my damn passion. I wrote your name on the wall (Lisette) and I remember our sweet past and I am in despair with huge remorse.

I want to tell you many thoughts from my heart. I don't understand why you took your life away. You had no reason to do so. You knew very well that you had us who loved you very much. Oh how I would like to turn back the hands of time and chat with you and be happy. They are times inexplicable and unforgettable. Oh how I wish that would have never happened.

Many people could have helped you and they didn't because they're retarded. These are the consequences for living in this crazy life. When your faith is little and when your mind loses hope and it explodes like a grenade, time finishes. First, one has to look up towards the sky and talk with HIM if we really deserve this life. I continue seeing you. I repeat: I wish this would have never happened. Rest in peace Nitza.

-Karlitos

From The Beat: We feel very deeply the loss of your friend. We hope that God has compassion on this person. Unfortunately, it's too late to rectify all this. Sometimes we are very egoistic and we don't know how to appreciate things or people until they are gone. Are you starting to realize this? Has this whole experience taught you to value life a little more? Did you try to help this person out? Now you have to look at your own life and how you can live it better and improve it.

Saddest Things

My saddest thing that I have is these things. One thing is my letter from my brother. I keep it, 'cause he's always locked up and I can't throw it away. The second thing is my letter from one ex-boyfriend, De' Shawn. He was the love of my life. The last thing is my picture and jewelry from my dad. I keep those things 'cause that's all I have from him when he died.

-Carmen, Marin

From The Beat: Those sweet, sad treasures are dear to your heart, Carmen. You sound like you've gone through and continue to suffer a lot of sadness in your young life. We hope you have the strength to endure all this, and also have lots of joy in your life. What sustains you? What gives you some fun?

Remembering You!

Ray Diddy,

I remember the time you made an interception and made a touch down
I remember the first time you talked me into being on the basketball team

I remember when you used to add beats to your c.d.

I remember the time you used to be there for me when nobody was there
for me.

I remember when you used to cheer for me when I was on the court.

I remember the time you helped me graduate from the 8th grade.

I remember you called me your "Lil' One" every time I was around you.

I remember the last thing you said to me: "I love you"

I remember me breaking down when I found out you was in heaven.

I remember when I seen you lookin' so quiet at your funeral

I remember you had you a nice outfit on and looking fresh like you always
was

I remember the kiss I gave you for the last time

I remember seeing your family break down an' cry for you.

I will always remember the love you had for me.

RIP Ray Diddy

We love you, you will always be in our thoughts.

-Lil' One GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It is always tragic when we see our young men die so young. But your poem is moving because you show us how important this young man was when he was alive, and what he meant to you. Did his passing make you want to make some changes in the way you live your life? If he could come back to this unit for five minutes and sit with you, what do you think his message to you would be?

The Best Summer I Ever Had

My best summer was in 2003. I got to go back to my country in Vietnam. I had lots of fun! My mom brought me to the big water park out there. I got to meet some of my family members that I hadn't met yet, and eat food that was hecka good. And my parents got remarried there too!

-Princess GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What a wonderful vacation for you! Besides getting to meet family for the first time, how did you like Vietnam? What was the best part about it? What was the worst? Do you want to go again? Would you ever consider living there? (And if you go again, would you consider taking us with you?)

Getting Better

Y'all can't walk a mile in my Air Forces. See, up here at Camp Sweeney, it's hot — and it's hard. I be up here tryin' to do right, but there be people up here tryin' to mess you up. I'm just speakin' to the kids in juvenile hall tryin' to get up here: Do your time and don't let the time do you. Make the best of your program.

I'm on the VOP list, and I'm tryin' to get off that list right now. I'm doing better than I was when I first came last month. I get my first home visit on the twentieth of this month. I'm tryin' to do good so I can get that first home visit and then more home visits. My birthday is tomorrow. on the tenth! But my stupid butt gon' be stuck here at Camp Sweeney. That's why y'all can't walk in my Air Forces, 'cause of the things I do and the people that be hatin' on me.

-Al Boo-Boom, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You may still mess up from time to time while you're trying to do good, especially surrounded by folks who pretend to be your friend and try to fill your head with bad ideas. But it's for sure you will mess up if you don't even try to do good — so, we'd have to say, you're right on track. We're proud of you for doing better, 'cause as long as you keep doing better and better, your life will keep getting better and better. That doesn't mean there won't be setbacks, but don't let setbacks knock you off track, and it will be all good in the end, young friend. Keep walking the walk and talking the talk of getting better all the time!

To My Deadly Grave

Well, my day is coming soon

Ready to settle down

With my woman

Watching the moon

Following the stars

From the heavenly midnight sky

Waiting every day

For when my day to die!

Like as a sinner

To my deadly grave!

One last time

It's time to pay

Wisdom come and go

But me

It stays in my mind

'Til my time to go!

My destiny

Is most likely to die

So once out

Hey, it's time, Ryno!

Get my diploma

And kick back

Go to school

With some freedom aroma!

Hey, it's nada

My time is coming

Sooner or later

So smile now

And you sure will cry later

-Ryno LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Ryno, you're free now, but ever since you've been writing your brilliant poems for The Beat Within, you've been predicting that as soon as you're on the outs again, you'll be killed in the streets, and we take you seriously. We hope something, someone will convince you to fight the forces you think are causing you to gravitate toward that fate. We tried for months. Nothing in nada, Ryno! You write that you want to go to stay in school and get your diploma, so the future must have come reality and meaning to you! Why isn't your young life so precious to you that you'd to anything to fight to keep it?

What Is The Real Deal?

I'm looking for someone that knows how to make me feel

Someone that knows how to keep it real

Honestly, I want someone that can hold me down

Someone that's really down

I'm talking about someone that's willing to "ride or die"

'Cause to me it's "do or die"

What is the real deal?

Someone that has a fly style, sex appeal, nice personality, funny,

What's the real deal?

I want someone that can make me smile,

Make me happy, make me shine

Someone to love me, someone to be there

For me through thick and thin

What is the real deal?

Some things I just don't know

But one thing I do know is,

I'm not a dime, I'm a diamond

'Cause dimes get spent and diamonds are forever

-Berlin GU, SF/YGC

From the Beat: What do you mean by "do or die"? Does it refer to your relationship, or to living the fast life on the streets? Do you want to be with someone who lives the fast life, in and out of prison, or someone who can physically be there with you, "through thick and thin"? We wish you would examine that phrase "ride or die" very closely, and bring all your most mature reasoning ability to the task. We think that "or" is the wrong conjunction. The truth of that phrase should be: "Ride and die."

Not In My Shoes

I don't think it would be good to walk a mile in my shoes. Because I did some bad things in my life. And now I have to pay the consequences for them. Some of the things I did in my life I can't take back.

I wouldn't want nobody to walk a mile in my shoes because I don't want them to go through the things I went through in my life. For example, I shot at people, I robbed people. And now these people are after me. And if you were in my shoes, they will be after you.

Now I regret, and I wish I could walk in someone else shoes. Really, I was running so fast in my shoes that I burned the souls in my shoes. And I wish I could walk in some new shoes so I could start over in my new path.

-Dom B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We appreciate your expressions of regret for some of the things you've done — and we're relieved that when you were shooting at people, you apparently didn't hit them, because that could have changed many lives forever, including yours. You don't need to walk in someone else's shoes, you just need to put your own shoes down on different paths. You don't have to wish you could walk in some new shoes, you have the power to do that right now. Of course, having that power is not the same as using that power. So, what are your plans when you walk out of here? Something new, we hope.

See And Hear A Little Of Everything

If you walk a mile in my Jordans, you will go to the town where it all go down, and if you don't know what the town is, that's Oakland. That's where my shoes will take you. There you will see and hear a little bit of everything, like little kids running around everywhere, people standing on the corner, people going to jail. And you hear gun shots, all those things.

And my shoes will take you to the basketball courts to go hoop. That's where it goes down at fat 5-on-5 game for money. And since you got on my shoes you gon win. Then after that you will see a lot of people like Keak Da Sneak. Then you will go to some girl house and do whatever. But I know what I will do...

And then after that do whatever you feel. Now that's how it's gon be if you walk in my Jordan's.

-DeAndre B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Thank you, DeAndre, for really taking us on a tour that includes some bad things (some people going to jail) as well as the good things (hooping). Do you always win when you play basketball? If so, maybe you have a career in the NBA. But that career, like all others, begins in the classroom, so we hope your shoes take you to school as well as all those other places.

What Such Love You Got For A Son

Mom, I always loved you from the start

And you were the main one I kept closest to my heart

And I'm sorry for the pain that I caused for both of us

I just pray that we can leave that in the dust

I know we had our jokes and laughs

Let's just forget about the stupid stuff I've done in the past

I'm sorry for running around drinking and smoking weed

From now on I'll try to be the best son that I can be

I just want to say I'm sorry for the stuff I've done

And now that I see what such love you got for a son

-Marcus/SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Mother. Mom. Mama. Ma.... These are the women in our lives that will always hold a special place in our heart. Whether we know our mothers or not....Whether we have good relationships with them or bad relationships....Whether we love or hate them... Whether they are living or passed on... Whether we have one or many...Our mothers, those strong women that fill our lives and hearts, will forever be that place to find compassion, love, and warmth.

Feeling Well, Doing Good

Hey Beat what's good? Well, it's Garza holdin' it down here at Camp. I've been MIA (missing in action) because I've been in Cornerstone: it's a construction class we have here at Camp, and it's hella fun! We went on a field trip with Cornerstone today — to Frisco!

Some words of advice: Keep your head straight and think positive. I've been cool, minding my own business and doing what I got to do. I passed my GED, and I'm going to be giving the speech at the graduation ceremony! and I just found out they're going to make a movie (the State) on my life experiences! Anything can happen as long as you're cool and you try — just try and things will happen in your life.

Another thing, sometimes it seems like everyone up at Camp is running (away)! If you come up here, pimp this program. It's hella easy!

Oh, I'm up to 315 pounds now! Much love and respect to those in the Hall. Until next time...

-Malo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It is great to hear that you're doing so well. And though we've missed you at Beat workshops, we're so happy that there is a program like Cornerstone for you to be involved in! Plus, you got your GED! Man, we're flat-out proud of you! And you're the graduating speaker — props! But now, what's this about a movie? Maybe it'll show you pumping iron, too, eh? Thanks for offering our readers good advice.

Politically Speaking

I don't know why Martin Luther King Jr., Malcom X, Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks and all the other African American people tried to make a difference because in the end all that hard work meant and means nothing to the white man. I don't think it's a coincidence that the two main men that tried to make a difference both got killed (Malcom X, Martin Luther King Jr.) why is it that after all these years of hard work and accomplishments from Latinos, and Afro-Americans there is still a lot of racism. And the white man is still running the show!?

-Juicy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You deliver a lot of important questions—ones that would take pages and pages to adequately address. History is an interesting thing—it would be nice if we learned from our past and evolved in the right direction, but it doesn't seem to happen so easily. Keep asking yourself those hard questions, and maybe do some research on the subject. In the meantime you must continue to empower yourself in the name of the great leaders you mentioned in your piece.

You Still Shout But No One Listens!

Walking a mile in my shoe

You thought you knew

The drama I been going through

How you like, wow!

I want out

You can't even handle

An hour of my life in your hands

And you feel trapped

And you' like

There's no way out!

But you still shout

But no one listens!

-Mac, Marin

From The Beat: No, Mac, we don't know what you're going through. Why don't you write about it for The Beat? You'll have hundreds of people reading what you write and listening to you! It must be normal to feel trapped in juvy, because you are! But if you mean you feel trapped by the whole of your life, do you think you could use someone wise, who you trust, to really listen to you? If so, ask for help, while you're in juvy, now! Do you have anyone in your life at home who you'd go to if you felt like you were in trouble? If so, can you call/write this person now? Get the help you need!

Something To Think About

This Ques back at it again writing to The Beat. I'm trying to get my priorities straight, but in this place (YGC) you can say something and get out and do something other than what you said you was going to do. Material items will make loved ones you don't even know start calling your phone.

To all my loved ones that were there for me before I had lots of material items, I feel you for that. It took me a long time to realize the things that I say and do. I also realize that I'm still young and I can make a lot of changes in life, and if it's a bad change I can fix it.

-Qbb B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: True, you are still young and you still can change a lot of things. But at the same time, Ques, if you are not ready to change or don't want to change, then no one can help you reach your goals. And putting off those changes you know will give you a better future only makes them harder to do. From our reading of your pieces, you seem ready to move into new and better territory. Let's see if we're right.

One Step Ahead

I'm one step ahead in my life, but for some reason I feel like I'm ten steps behind. Maybe it's just because I'm still locked up. Stuck in my own world, I got my own concept of life.

I just accomplished my most valuable goal, which was getting my GED! Yup! I got that thang! Feeling all trained! If I hadn't come back to Camp or got locked up again, then I would've never got it. Today I can admit that I've changed a lot, and I can say that life has been good to me. I feel more strong and more positive now that I've accomplished so much.

i feel all new
leaving people with clues
to words that i say
mind-play-
ing and get-
ting into people's heads
money been fed
no more tears shed

-Viet, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Bravo! Hurrah! Props and kudos! Man, we've been reading your poems for so long, what'll we do when you're gone? And we've been watching you grow. Unlike so many, you've refused to backslide as you get closer to being released to the outside! And you got the GED, which should help you find a j-o-b, 'cause you've got to have money to keep your disposition sunny — everybody's got to eat, but now you can do it right. Sweet! Thanks for the piece of good news, and the poetry, too.

Sad Eyes

I guess one of the saddest things I own is my eyes, my feelings and memories. They are just sad because when I wake up in the morning I'm sleepy and I see nothing but white, different shades of brown, and silver. These happen to be very boring colors, so within five minutes I start remembering the outside world whether it was because I had a dream or just because I know where I am and I'm aware that this is not a place I'm supposed to be in, if you know what I mean. Other stuff but I have no more time. All I have to say is be open. Don't trip.

-Meen B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This has the hint of a truly interesting piece, Meen. It makes us want to know more, much more. What have your eyes seen, your heart felt and your brain remembered that makes you sad? What is the "other stuff" you didn't have time to write about? If you're not supposed to be here, where are you supposed to be? How will you get there? How will you stay there?

My Life And How I Feel

My life is full of ups and down, good and bad as well as right and wrong. I feel everything happens for a reason even if it means me being hurt or going to jail. It's all for a purpose to change me or to give me a wake up call that I am not doing something right or I am doing it wrong.

Regardless what the case may be, I try to listen to it to the best of my ability. I also feel when you lose something or someone it's God's way of closing a door and opening another.

So far in my experiences change is not just bad but it can be good too, even if it doesn't seem that way all the time. I feel you should try to embrace it best as possible, because you never know what can come out of it.

Besides change, listening to others that give positive intellectual advice is a good way to learn and get a new game or be put up on some stuff you wasn't knowing about.

I also know now I don't do everything right or at least the way I suppose to be but I feel I should live life to the fullest and not dwell on the past but look to the future! But regardless what you do or how you do it or what you feel and know, do you and don't be a fool and play a part like in a movie 'cause sooner or later that movies going to end and you're going to be so caught up in your act you'll never be able to find the true you! So be you, be true and just keep it real!

-Juicy's Wifey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Listening is always a good thing, even when we don't agree with what the person is saying. And yes, change can sometimes lead to big surprises—good ones. Keep up the good work, don't let anyone keep you down. The world is yours! Get up and out of the system!

Mom's Obit Is The Saddest Thing I Own

My mother died from a heart attack
the saddest thing I own is her obituary.

Certificate of death.

My therapist committed suicide,
she jumped off the San Rafael Bridge
and the saddest thing is a white hoodie with her face on it.

-Ashley, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's heavy and tragic. Tragic that two people who we assume you were very close to, dying. What have you done to move on from this pain? We're sure there are many memories good and bad with your mom, but losing your therapist must have caught you way off guard. RIP to your mom and your therapist.

The Outing

Today, the whole Cornerstone class went on an outing to San Francisco, to an Apprenticeship Expo! It was hella cool, 'cause we were getting hella information about getting into a trade-school program, or something very good so someone can take advantage and get much knowledge.

Well, every thing was very cool up there. I liked everything! And I'm looking forward to joining a good trade school so I can be successful in life and take care of mines. But if I would have had this opportunity before I committed a stupid crime, I would not even want to commit any type of crime! And I would've been kicking it in the outs right now, just working and kicking it with my girl!

So I won't mess up like that again. But, yeah, I'm telling ya not to be (or not to keep on) doing stupid stuff like that. Peace.

-Brainiak, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've got to take a deep, hard look at how you act differently when you're under the influence of others. You were kicking it with your older brother, and pretty soon you were doing what you'd been writing us that you didn't want to ever be doing again. It's not a question of "getting away with it" — 'cause one thing leads to another, and you always get caught sooner or later. No more exceptions, follow your own advice!

Black-On-One-Proud

I'm an on-one girl coming from a confused world...
where people get it confused and mixed up.
As days go by I keep confidence and pride by my side,
can't nothing to hold me down,
I'll put it down for the crowd,
I'll say it loud, "I'm black and proud."
Coming from the street where most people don't
know me, trying to take advantage, but just can't
manage,
boys and girls living in the world
envy and hate me, but real talk man,
"they can't fades me..."
I'm strong, I'm positive,
I'm here to tell it like it is.
It's my communitive,
but when I leave this world some day, I'll let it be
known for the last time I am the future
I'm here to tell it like it is,
I'm black and I'm proud
can't nothing or nobody hold this on-one girl down.

-Lil' Shai, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is such an amazing piece! Way to be proud and say it loud. What's the secret for others to feel so confident.

Forget Walkin' A Mile In My Shoes

Honestly I don't think anyone would want to walk in my shoes. I don't think most people wouldn't want to see, do, and go through what I do in my daily routine.

It's dark and lonely. You never know who you're really going to meet. It's dark and scary being on the crazy streets. It's not even being on the track but going on an outcall where you've never been is even scarier than that.

To walk a mile in my shoes most people would not choose to. But certain circumstances lead me to do what I do. So try if you can to walk a mile in my shoes. And I promise to God it's not a road you want to choose.

-Angela, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like a rough road you travel. How could it be different? You can choose a different way in the future, right? Often it seems we don't have a choice, but we're just not looking in the right places. Make this juvenile hall stop the turning point to a safer life.

Nobody Could Walk In My Shoes

Personally, I don't think nobody could walk a mile in my shoes. I been done seen hella stuff — I seen people get shot; I seen my friends go to jail for twenty-five to life; I seen people get beat up by the police; I seen my best friend get hit by the bus and the driver kept going!

I got shot a few years ago. I was just fifteen. The other kid walked up to me and asked if I had some weed. I didn't know them, so I said no, and I walked away — and they started busting at me! I got hit three times, but I kept running. I didn't even know I was hit until I got home and my brother told me about it!

I remember we played dice by my house, and the cops rode up and everyone started running — so I ran, too. And a cop hit me with his car! Then he took me home. I remember one time I was riding my bike. I was thirteen years old, and a car ran the red light and hit me off!

-Cannon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: These terrible things you list in your piece that happened to you, getting shot, getting hit with cars, could have happened to almost anyone. They weren't your fault. Of course, selling weed and playing dice aren't the safest activities to engage in on the street, even by your own house, but then neither is riding a bike — none of that means you should have gotten shot or hit by a car. On the other hand, you've seen people get shot and you've seen shooters get major jail time, so why do you want to continue this street life of crime? Maybe you've seen enough of this stuff as a boy and you're ready to be a man, take a stand, no more running with the gang or crew — get a job, do right, and just be you. 'Cause why keep walking your shoes down this same street that leads pain, jail time and self-defeat?

My Summer In The Caribbean

Two years ago, my parents took my sister, me, and two of our friends on a cruise. At first I wasn't very excited, because we would be out of town for the first two weeks of summer. That's when all the parties happen! All I could think about was missing out on all the fun, so I thought!

It ended up being the best summer of my life, just for this trip. We flew to Puerto Rico, then got on the boat and went to Aruba and Barbados, and then St. Thomas. I got to swim with dolphins and drink the best tropical drinks (virgin, of course!) that I've ever had. It made my whole year.

-Longing For the Caribbean, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sounds totally fabulous! That trip must have changed your life! Were the dolphins you swam with in a pool? In the sea? Tell us more! If you're back home this summer, does your family have any more wild plans? Will you please take the staff of The Beat Within with you all, wherever you go? We're already packed. We'll take that vacation over this mini vacation in the hall, that could so easily turn into a very long one if you do not get your life back on track.

It's Time To Change The Cycle

My grandma always used to tell me, she didn't want me to be like my friends that I hang around.

Even though I got caught up doing something stupid, I'm going to do my time in here and I won't let my time do me. When I get my group home release, I'm going to do my six-to-nine months and get it over with. I'm tired of running!

I'm going to use this group home to my advantage and get a job and work on getting my diploma and try my best to do right. Now I have a plan, so I can't fail unless I don't follow out with my plan.

-Young Barlow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've got your mind working right, finally hearing what your grandma was trying to tell you. Now here's the deal: follow through with your plan, no matter what, and it'll be all good in the end.

I Sit Contemplating

As I sit in my room thinking about what I'm gonna do now. How am I going to exceed in making changes? I sit in my room sayin' to myself, "I can't live like this! I gotta make a change. I have wonderful family members including my daughter Whitney, who I can trust and talk to but yet and still I go astray."

I have made a decision as of now to change my life.

-Nu Nu Baby, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Good for you for asking such tough questions. We hope by the time you read this you are continuing to take the steps in changing your life for the better, not only for you, but for Whitney!

Looking Back

I miss when we could all get along
I miss the way I was loved
It was as beautiful as a song
I miss the home-cooked food
I miss the hugs and kisses
It was always a good mood
I miss my feather bed
And the way I got to sleep
In it was great
I should have never sinned

-Angela, Marin

From The Beat: We bet you miss your family, friends and the comforts of home. Well, now you realized you made a poor choice, so now it's on you to correct the mistake(s), and now is the time to improve your life and prepare for a better future.

The Saddest Thing I Possess

some of the saddest things i possess are memories
 memories of past friends that i lost
 not too long ago i lost a friend named armon
 he was a crazy lil' ninja
 the last memory i had was when we were at a party
 and we got into it with some ninjas
 and we got outside and somebody tried to snake him
 from the side
 and i ran up and hit dude
 then some big ninja got the best of me
 but afterwards we went looking for them
 and we found a couple of them
 and armon picked up a big ol' two-by-four
 and i fired on dude first
 then ninja hit dude with the stick
 then them ninjas ran into a hotel and some more trash
 happened
 but a few months later the ninja met his demise
 and i just had hella memories of hoopin' and play
 fightin' with ninja
 i miss 'im — rest in peace armon green
 you are always missed
 my other friend his name was ronald easiley aka ron
 ezz
 he got killed when i was a freshman
 i am now a senior
 but he was my ninja
 he had the funniest jokes in the world
 he used to roast ninjas
 it used to be hella funny
 i used to always see him when i was in middle school
 after school he'd be there workin' at berkeley bowl
 but some ninjas took his life
 but i loved him like he was my older cousin or brother
 ron ezz you gone but not forgotten
 you will always be in my heart
 rest in peace — love you my ninja

-Lil' Toot, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Looking for revenge is at the core of the problem that took both your friends' lives. That cycle of violence keeps taking lives. What did you gain by chasing someone into a hotel but the likelihood that later they might come looking for you as well, maybe with a gun? How many of the people you love have to die before you see that you're part of the problem and not part of the solution — part of the drama that's took their lives away before they hardly got to start living them. Think it all through again, and let the love you will always hold in your heart for them, make you see the problem for what it is — hate kills kids.

Walkin' Alone

For all out there this is Lil' Joker, I want to let y'all know it feels like everytime I'm walkin' alone. Somebody is going to kill me. It's not safe walkin' in my shoes I done lots of bad stuff. Now I got enemies.

Gang bangin' ain't cool. it will have you doin' stuff that you wouldn't think you'd do. Gang banging will have you smoking, drinking. Yeah, I'm a gang member from Hayward. This is the life I choose to live. I think it's cool but if I could stop I would.

-Lil' Joker, 150 Crew

From The Beat: First of all, you can stop — if you ask for help. But you know that deep down, and you've heard it before. We want to know whether you think the gang life is cool or not cool. You said it both ways in your piece, and we get it. It can be cool in the sense that you've accepted it, "it's cool". But you know that violence and drugs aren't meant to be the center of a young man's life, it's not cool. Tell us more about the tension between it's cool and it ain't cool.

My Own Man

i take care of business
 i don't let love come between me and money
 i know blood is thicker than water
 i know it isn't the strong that survive
 i know it's the smart that survive
 let no one bring me down
 i'm not the person who clowns around
 i talk about ideas instead of people
 time is money and money is time
 when you have money everyone knows your name
 but when you are broke no one notices you
 i'll never go against the grain
 believe in my dreams and goals still
 i'm ready for the hills and the dips
 no woulda — coulda — and shoulda
 mistakes are to learn from
 so when next time comes
 i am my own man
 i ain't one of these ninjas shakin' they' dreads
 i ain't stupid in the head
 i love my mother and always will
 taught to forgive and forget
 enjoy life and don't let little things get me upset
 here to pass the system's test
 represent myself and family
 trust no one except myself and family
 i know where i came from
 so i know where i'm going
 ready for rainy days
 vexed by the ignorant
 better off by myself than with everybody else
 never a quitter
 stay reachin' until i got it
 never too greedy
 what goes around
 comes around twice as hard
 isolated from the fake
 stay true always
 every lie that is told
 it takes five more to cover it
 what's in the dark always comes to light
 never again will i wear a mask
 will always remember who i am

-Lil' Toot, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your gnomic phrases all have the sound of wisdom, but that first one or two seem to be missing the point. If money does not serve love, it has no value and in the end will bury you, alive or dead, fill you with dread, with hopelessness and fear in a feverish head, if money does not serve love. And when love serves money, it's like the devil's mouth is full of honey, and you get screwed; guaranteed all your winnings you will lose. Here you are incarcerated. It's time to make some changes. Get out of the street game, or you'll lose your life, love and freedom in exchange for a minute of money and a moment of fame.

I Look Inside Myself to See

When I look out my cell window, I see nothing, because you can't see out of it! But it reminds me of all of the days that I am missing my life and everything that I am trying to accomplish.

I want to go to college, and get a job. Basically I need to get my life together, because I am not going to end up like so many other people that are just statistics, RIP's on a shirt, or sitting in San Quentin. I will do something with my life.

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you slip and fall on your way, just pick yourself back up and stay on track — so you never come back to lock up. Keep that positive attitude and you'll make it through this mess to achieve some real life success!

Straight To The Hood In My Shoes

If you were to walk a mile in my shoes, your feet would lead you straight to the hood! It's not a bad neighborhood if you know what you doing – and not wearing the wrong color.

What sights would you see? It depends where you at 'cause where I be at you see a lot of colored people when I say that I mean browns, black, and maybe some whites. Yes my block is ghetto and is one of the hottest places in Hayward. My people is respectful and solid but that depends on what kind of person you are. We'll get at you the same way you'll get at us, in anyway.

Who would you meet in my block? Scandalous ninjas but then good peeps, it depends on what situation are we in, if ninjas are hungry they'll do anything to eat.

How do I conduct myself when somebody approach me? Paranoid, but I won't show it 'cause that's how you show your fear. To be continued.

-Lil' Flaco, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Lil' Flaco, actually we want to know what it's like to be you. To walk in your shoes would mean that we would understand you better by experiencing what you've experienced. Why would you go back to the ghetto? Do you ever see yourself living a lifestyle where you don't need to be paranoid all the time. Can you picture your life in someone else's shoes? Do you know why you are the way you are? Do you know how you got to where you are? These are just a few questions we like to bring up, so that once you know how you got to where you are, you can decide where you want to be and step in that direction. Understand?

TIME

Hey Beat! This is Lil' Neph once again, just touching bases with you, letting you know what's really good! Well, I've been locked up for six months now, doing my time, keeping busy!

I've been reading a lot of books since i've been in here! I've expanded my reading to a higher level! Reading is knowledge. It can take you to a different place in a different time. Being in here has taught me a lot of things, like when there's a time to speak and when there is a time to listen! I've learned how to hold my temper in situations when I normally would go bad on someone! And there's more for me to speak about how being here is not a bad thing, 'cause I've learned so much about life and what it holds for me!

I've realized that there's a whole 'nother world beyond this circle that I'm living in! For me it's time to step out this circle and see beyond what I can see now! But I only got thirty-eight more days left, and I'm gonna finish this time strong! I'm out. One love and respect to all out there doing time. Keep your head up. Every day is a step close to when you get out! I'm out.

-Lil' Neph, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This might be the last issue you get to read before you're released to home and the street. You know we respect you and how much you've grown over these months and weeks you've been writing this time for The Beat. And you know we believe in you and what you can do with your freedom this time after your release. But now, we feel the need to warn you, too. 'Cause so many who did their time locked up with no time on the outs, left with such positive hopes — a change of attitude and a larger scope of what's possible to be and do. Too many of them slipped back into how they used to think and what they used to do. A few are on that cabinet in the office of your unit — the one with pictures of those who've passed through this unit only to hit the street and either be killed or kill someone. Of course, many more just get stuck in the system's revolving door. All we're saying is be ready for setbacks and moments of disillusionment, and don't turn back — don't quit on yourself. Keep taking those steps in a positive direction, and look for progress not perfection. We wish you all the best of the best. Don't let the gang pull you down to the level of the rest who fail the test of freedom. Don't let go of your new goals, keep 'em alive — no more push, pull, die.

When You Get Hungry!

Hey, Beat, if you were to walk a mile in my shoes, I don't think you would like it too much, because it is just a bunch of wondering what the ef you're going to do night after night and wondering where you're going to sleep. I mean, it sounds harder than it really is, and sometimes it's even fun, until you get hungry.

What do you think I would do? Anything! If you had to eat and had no money and had to rob somebody, I don't think that you would be able to do it — until you get hungrier! One time, I didn't want to rob somebody, but I got so hungry I almost fainted! My sister told me that she would buy me food at Carl's Jr. if I turned myself in, so I did it! At least I didn't rob nobody.

-Phillip, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You write a powerful piece from beginning to end, but we have to admit you surprised us with your ending. Man, nobody should have to feel the need to steal in order to eat, especially not a juvenile. How is it your sister had money and you didn't? Did she work for hers or what? And why in the world do so many young people think robbing is better than begging — did you ever ask for money to eat? These fools will clown a beggar and respect a mean-spirited hardcore thug. Why? Did you ever eat at a so-called "soup kitchen" or a church or whatever? Would you be more ashamed of that than of stealing? You wrote such an intelligent, passionate and informative piece, we just wonder what you'd say about begging and/or free food programs. What about free food at school? And if there's a stigma — how about for everybody? Oh, by the way, we are very proud of both you and your sister for what you did, together!

So Sad

i'm so tired
of these juvenile hall walls
it seems this whole system is set up
to knock you down and fall
this life i live is not normal
waking every morning wondering
what cop will harass me next
it's so sad how many fallen
soldiers we lost in the game
now they are gone all we could do
now is reminisce on his or her name
sometimes i wonder why we do what we do
rob people steal goods
that don't belong to us
it's so sad that lil' mikey had to die
who will be next to fail god's purpose
it's so sad that youngstas on the block
tryin' to get paypa to support
themselves and feed family get caught
and is capable of getting life at such a young age
it's so sad that bush might send america to an end
so listen my good friend
slow life down to let childhood catch up
it's so sad that so many people in prison
are doing hard time
but they're innocent
just because they look like the next black brotha
that did the crime
and to all my ninjas from the town
stay solid in the halls and let's pimp this juvenile system
'cause it's just set up to break us down and stress us
so be cool

-Lon Lon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yeah, it's sad, sadder than sad, bad, worse than bad, an epidemic tragedy that has a generation meant to be free killing each other for a little bit of money or greed if it's more than what they need — and even if it is to feed their family, why does it have to be on the grind? Why don't the urban schools have the capacity to train young minds to make real money in a profitable American or multi-national company? And where are the leaders to demand that America make a stand not in some foreign land, but here at home where plenty of our own are suffering violence by the hands of boys with guns that can't be silenced? Thanks for your great poem that's so sad, bad and worse, as we all seem to fall so far short of God's purpose for us here on earth — to share love, food and shelter with the poor and escape the curse of ego, greed, thoughts and deeds so perverse.

Missing You

my heart aches within, from missin' you
 my lips long for the feel of kissin' you
 right now all i need is to gently touch your skin
 to look into your eyes and see deep within
 just one warm embrace
 just to look upon your face
 just one little touch
 from the one i love so much
 if i could gaze upon your smile
 for just a little while
 to know that you miss me too
 as i'm thinking of you
 to hear the sound as you breathe
 knowing you'll never leave
 to see you walk up to me
 then embrace you tenderly
 to just be with the one who's sent my heart reeling
 and brought about this downpour of emotion and
 feeling
 i sit here alone in my cell tonight
 and pray that somehow this all turns out right
 i've told you many thoughts that weren't borrowed or
 bought
 and in my lifetime who would have thought
 that i would found someone who was just meant for
 me
 i can't explain the magic or why this should be
 but there is one thing that i know for certain
 that this just ain't over till one of us draws the final
 curtain
 for i've seen an angel and i want to know
 if it's my choice to make i'll never let you go
 don't know what life holds
 maybe there's no reason or rhyme
 to think you might be mine in a matter of time
 and though i cannot touch you and we are now apart
 my love, you do dwell so deep within my heart
 — i'm out

-Lil' Neph, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you choose to let the tenderness in your heart spill onto the page, your words fly high and free above the walls of your cage. This poem is so sweet and true and full of the soft side of you. It's a good thing that you can feel like this, even if it hurts while you're in here missing her kiss; and it's a good thing you can say what you feel, 'cause unspoken desires seldom are fulfilled. Thanks for the poetry. Follow through with your best, and what you hope will be, we know will be your new reality. Just follow through, and you'll pass the test.

Rest In Peace, My Brother

My brother, Felix, passed away six months ago. It hurt me a lot. At first, I couldn't understand why he left the world the way he did. He was shot five times. At first, I felt a lot of anger. I still do, but at first I wanted to hurt someone the way they did my brother.

I think about him every day, and I know that he's always with me. I always keep his last words in my heart. He said, "Don't follow my foot steps. I want you to do better than me. I love you." He didn't want me to go through what he went through because he lived a hard life.

I got a picture of him that makes me drop tears every time I look at it. Sooner or later, I'll be with him again, forever.

-Felix's Brother, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You forgot to write you name at the end of your piece, so we signed it the best we could. Adding to the cycle of violence and killing won't bring Felix back, so direct your anger at "the game" or whatever you want to call this gangster/thug mentality that is turning our cities' streets into killing fields. Your brother's words to you carry the weight of both love and truth — the tragedy is that Felix didn't change direction before his death. RIP Felix.

Sad Things and Positive Thoughts

The saddest things I have right now, are the pictures of my family and friends that I love, and my girlfriends as well. When I'm in my room, I just try to read a lot, to keep my mind busy, so that I won't get mad at myself or at others. I try to just think positive and pray a lot. That's what keeps me motivated to really want to do good on the outs.

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Those sad things in your life right now, will be glad things again — so long as you stay motivated to do good on the outs, all will be well. No doubt!

A Flow Fo' Those Who Know

i haven't washed my khaki's in days
 but they black so you can't see the dirt
 i kinda like 'em grimly like that
 and you can kindly step back and disperse
 if you ain't feeling me
 no hard feelings as long as you keep it real wit' me
 not too much that appeal' to me
 but if i want it, i gon' get it
 and if it could be divided with the homies
 I'm a split it
 just the way that i was raised
 quick to get punished if i didn't share
 even if i bought it myself
 my mother didn't care
 but she couldn't stop me from packing straps and doing dirt
 she tried to find the best of it
 accepted it, although it hurt
 'cause the turf got a grip on a man
 at a young age, scraping change to get a spot
 but man those were the fun days
 and if i was broke, i'd steal two forties
 out of bonfare
 drink them in the alley way back when i had long hair
 and i miss a lot of old friends
 but nothing comes between me and my family
 that i've chosen

-J-Dog, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You say it used to be fun, and more and more as time goes by, you'll find that the fun part is over and done. You can no longer go on living this life or you'll die by a gun — or spend the majority of your years in jails and prisons. Then you can come out from time to time and find someplace to get drunk and high, but your life will have just passed you by. Now's the time to turn it around. Yeah, and make your mom proud!

I Miss Home

I miss getting up in the fresh day, looking out my window and saying what's up to all my people/friends. I miss getting up, making whatever kind of food I want. I miss getting on that fifteen min' Bart from the East Oakland to North Oakland where I kick it with friend.

I miss going over my girlfriend's house, playing with my dog, and doing what boyfriends and girlfriends do. I miss going outside, seeing the cars ride past by. I miss hopping in cars and riding around, slapping! I miss putting on my own things, 'cause locked up in here, I have to put on what they say.

I miss playing when I want to play. The thing I miss most is — I'm not free! I'm not home! I'm on someone else throne! This is exactly what I miss about home!

-Cartier, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We don't even hear you missing anything that could get you in trouble, depending on how you kick it with your friend in the North or what all you do when riding around with a crowd in a car, slapping! So what keeps bringing you back here? Why do what you do to get yourself back here at all? You should be out, enjoying the end of the school year and start of summer!

To The Uncommitted

First of all, I would like to introduce myself to the females. My name is Rodric, but everybody calls me by my middle name, Kali. To the dudes, about whom I don't care, y'all call me Lil' Mainey aka the Prince — my M-O (modus operandi) toward y'all is: Forget a hater!

'Cause that's what y'all are, haters! Once y'all see that a whole lot of attention is focused on someone, y'all find a reason to hate.

But, anyways, the main reason for me writin' this, is because really I am a writer. Really I am writin' this because I want females to understand something: To be honest, every dude ain't the same, thinker-wise. Some may be the same in cheatin'. I say that 'cause, yes, I have cheated. And, yes, I hurt her, well, a lot. And, yes, it came back on me. I know how a broken heart feels. I wanted to let y'all know. I'm confessin' — confessin' to let others know that there is still some truth out there. It's more than one dude thinking the same way I am. It's just that dudes out here can't show no side of their emotions around anybody. And when they do show y'all, they end up changing.

Three of my patnas died in the last two months. They lived the life of thizz, and damn, they lost it! They did stupid things and got shot down. Me, I never popped a pill in my life. It just wasn't me. I'm my own man. I followed a follower when I was thirteen, 'cause I had no father or, better yet, no role model. I made a lot of mistakes, but there's lessons. A lot of people never really understood me. I been comin' to the Hall since I was ten. The reason's because the system kept sendin' me to group homes, and I ran from all eight of them! See, I never really had a chance with my family.

I'm seventeen now. There ain't no excuse about anything. You could tell everybody about what happened to you in the past or the things you been through, and they don't care. The only person who might care is you. I'm telling y'all because I'm not ashamed of my feelings. I'd rather express them than hide them. I know for a fact that somebody reading this, cares about what I'm talking about.

If that's not you, then I'm not talking to you. But, anyway, back to the point: I ain't gon' be frontin' and I ain't frontin'. I find beauty in every young woman I meet. If she's ugly, then her eyes dream beauty. If she's fat, then she's got a cute voice. I mean, I'm'a keep it solid. I do want me a fine, thick girl in life. But what I want don't matter in this world, and the same with y'all. What we want may come past us, but that fine dude y'all females want, gon' end up bein' ugly with sex-play or carin' for you.

I'm sayin' not every dude y'all run into, will be that way through time. I am sayin' doe, um... yeah I'm a prince with no king as a father. I'm sensitive with a sense of humor. I write poetry for a livin', ask the Beat Within ladies about how I look. I'm not the cutest dude in the world, but I got the finest heart of love! To the uncommitted, my advice is — love yourself before you love anybody else. Everybody you find ain't true love or a true lust; some people nowadays is heartless! But, on the real, everybody got a true love 'cause everybody a book: some get opened and some get turned aside and some never read, but one day, somebody like me gon' read you and listen to your heart, body and mind! And when they do, y'all do the same. Men can't live without women! Why you think God made woman! And the truth is that women can't live without men. The reason is 'cause money can't love you. Yo' potna can't make you feel like the woman do, or, for the girls, like that dude! Only a woman and a man, can complete a whole.

-Lil' Mainey the Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In this day and age, when the debate is between civil union versus marriage for gays and lesbians, the notion that only a man and a woman can complete each other in love, seems (at best) a quaint notion. That aside, we agree with you about everyone deserving love and everyone being, in fact, lovable, even if that special loved has not yet arrived. Your notion that there is beauty in everyone, also, feels absolutely true; though some cannot yet see it themselves, it's there; and if no one else has seen it yet, yes, someone will. Why you call every male a hater, though, is hard to understand? Don't you think you're overstating the case? Hating comes fast and often when you're locked up in the Hall, with blind mouths spitting hate twenty-four/seven it seems. That provides all the more reason we value your sharing your thoughts, poems and dreams. We're sorry to see you headed to the Y — is that really happening? How is it that a mistake when you were thirteen has led you to this position? Did you just get caught up in the system and kept running from each and every placement? Or what?

You Wouldn't Make It Walkin' A Mile In My Shoes

Q-vo Beat, let me start by extending my love and respect to the worthy, going through these hectic circumstances as well as tiempo. Well, with all this said, let's get down to business. Well, if you were to walk a mile on my shoes, I think all you vatos wouldn't make it.

The life I live is crazy— vatos getting killed, familia doing hard time. I'm walking down the calles with my head up high letting all these fellow residents know that I'm the bad. And I'm banging for my barrio, nothing could stop me. I'm a soldado ready for war. Vatos wouldn't hang, you'll have to be a Pitbull to walk in my shoes. This life ain't no joke! I may laugh and giggle, but I never let my guard down. I let vatos know that I'm proud of who I am.

So are you ready? I don't think so. You wouldn't stand a chance sporting these Cortez. You ain't ready to take a stroll through my barrio, where the life we live is too much for you vatos to stand on your own two feet. Well, that's a little something to you fellow convicts behind these walls. Well allow me to excuse myself now, with respect.

-Giggles, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, one week you give us a peek into how you see that you've taken yourself to a place where you really don't want to be. Then the next week, you flip back to the same old bullshhh that got you into this! Man, that's why you kept coming back here again and again, until now you're off the Y. We really do hate to see it. And when we read your words here, that's what we see — you back to your old hard-headed stupidity.

I Know You Care

i can see it in your eyes
i know you love me
you so often tell me about your feeling inside
you must know that it's hard to express
all the tender emotion come through my chest
i know you love me and you mean the whole world
my heart pours out when you pulling on my cord
sometimes it's not enough just to have you in my life
without you girl i'd probably go insane all night
it's something about you that you said at the park
these feelings i got for you is coming from my heart
i want our love to always be a personal thing
just between me and you, we will complete our dreams
you are my one true love
the days we share are my blessings
the memories we make are my treasures
the togetherness we have is my dream come true
and the understanding we share is my love to you
it's something about you i just can't ignore
even more than the physical attention i want to explore

-Lil' Ant, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've become quite the lyrical poet. You have always had it inside you but just didn't know it. Now every week in The Beat you show it — lay down the words as fast as they can flow. Poem after poem you publish in our zine, as if rhymes come to you as easy as floating downstream.

Do Not Pop Pills

Do not pop pills, because it will kill you. It will mess up your brain and it will make you do what ain't right. Pills will make you want to have sex without a condom, so you can get a S.T.D.

So if don't want to get skinny and don't want to be dead, do not pop pills. You won't have to go through this kind of thing. But if you don't care about yourself, then pop all you want! You will remember one day that people told you not to pop. You will get punished one day. So don't pop pills.

-The Truth, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know this piece was inspired by the drawing on the cover of an old issue of The Beat. In fact, on the back of this piece, you drew a great copy of that pill-sucking fool gracing the cover of that issue. But what we want to know is, have you quit taking pills or will you go back to popping triple stacks?

Walked A Mile Past My Life

The reason I say that, is because I've wasted so much time in my life by not going to school and by coming in and out of jail — it feels like a mile!

Like when I was in the sixth grade, I stopped going to class, thinkin' it was cool — smoking purple every hour, messing with the girls that also weren't in class. Now that I'm older, behind in school and behind bars, too, it really feels like a mile! But next time, I won't walk the same route.

-Lil' Sunny D, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Now that you've realized you passed your stop, riding on those feet that habitually walked out of class and into a cloud of smoke — you can turn yourself around, put the blunt down and earn that high school degree. Then it's on to college and/or a j-o-b. Going to jail and wasting life, will be history.

It Sucks Walking In My Shoes

Right now walking in my shoes sucks. Not being able to piss when I want to piss, pretty much just someone running my life.

Even if I wasn't in "The Hall" right now, I've been in CPS (Child Protective Services) for years and my parents don't have custody of me.

I have two little sisters 13 and 7 and I'm 17 about to be 18.

I can't even count how many group homes and rehabs they have tried to put me in all around CA. And I've ran from every single one and no matter how far it was I still found my way back to Oakland.

And now that I'm in here they're realizing that since this is the only place I can't run from they're not trying to let me out, besides my GTA and two warrants. But it kind of sucks when they separate you from your little sisters.

So when I run 'cause I'm old enough to know my parents didn't do nothing and I'm still going to see them. But they're trying to say because my dad and mom saw me on the under and didn't turn me in that they're bad parents. My parents can't and don't have the heart to turn me in and why should they?

-Rachael, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you run back to Oakland where do you run to? We assume to your parents. Where are your two little sisters? With them? It doesn't help to say, but we'll say it anyway, we understand as much as you have allowed to see into your life. It is tragic when the system gets a hold of child's life. It's also tragic when parents do not have the tools to take care of their child(ren). What's your plan for yourself and for your future? How do you see yourself as a parent way down the road, knowing what you know? Do you even see yourself as a parent?

I Am Not My Hair!

Once this girl said to me during a stupid argument, "With your SHORT HAIR!" And I told her, "Girl, why settle for the worst when it's only a matter of time before my hair grows back? You got to stick with that face, for the rest of your life!"

It was obvious she had low self-esteem because I saw the confusion and deep thoughts in her face and I kinda felt bad and if I want to cut my hair short, no matter what I do to myself, I am still me and I am conceited and best believe I got a reason.

People try to bring me down by saying, "It's all bad, you had long hair, why you cut it? Even my friends was surprised but it's some other details involved, but all I can say is karmas a bee. My self-confidence is above the sky and I look good with long, short, etc., whatever hair. I am so beautiful, and I love myself. Why dwell on something that can grow back?"

Please, it's really not worth the tears. My aunties do hair and they said when you cut your hair, it grows back healthier and longer! So that's what motivates me and when I do get my hair back I am gon' look extra good.

I love myself, I love who I be, I love Mookie man. It's incomprehensible to explain. I still get hated on with short hair and county pinks, does it get better? Ladies, long hair doesn't make you look more beautiful or more sexy, it's just hair but to you ladies who do have long hair, I respect that and I see you no different, we're all women in God's eyes so, what's the big deal?

I am so conceited to the point some females envy my self-confidence. Nothing they say about me can bring me down. This is only the beginning of my life! Got years ahead of me if it's God's will and it will grow back. Hahaha! That's what's so funny to me it's all good 'cause I know I am pretty and like I said before I am conceited, I got a reason and that's a understatement.

-Britonia, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're right about your hair growing back, but what has this experience taught you (having short hair)? Do you think people really hate on you just because you have short hair? Is it possible that it's your self-esteem that is getting on people's nerves, causing them to "hate"? Sometimes we pretend to have a lot of self-confidence as a result of having low self-confidence. The point is, whether you have long hair or look good, the way people treat you, reflects greatly on how you treat others.

Questions — And Answers?

I really don't feel like writing right now. So I am going to share some questions I have been thinking about, because — who knows? — maybe someone who reads them will have some answers for me.

How can one President (George W. Bush) put this country into more debt than the previous forty-two Presidents combined? Even after having inherited the most balanced cabinet (Clinton's) since the first (Washington's)?

And why do I have to suffer because of someone else taking a vacation (the judge)? Will I be able to transition successfully after being locked up for so long? Am I really a really bad person? Or am I just a victim of circumstance and the system, like a lot of people cry and claim they are? What might I have accomplished if I hadn't gotten locked up? And, as our time to write comes to a close, one more question: Why don't we ever have enough time?

-R, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Cut taxes and dramatically increase military spending, and the nation plummets into debt. Reagan did it and Papa Bush who inherited Reagan's debt, failed to win reelection because of it. Clinton balanced the budget, and W. puts together a cabinet of old Reagan appointees who take us to war and back into debt, deeper debt. As to whether you're a bad person, only you can answer that. Did you do bad things? And if you did, why? And now that you know some of what you did was bad, will you continue doing the same things all over again when you're released? And if you have been a victim of circumstance, it is now on you to rise above those circumstances in the future.

My Whole Ghetto Family, We All Went to Las Vegas

I don't really remember the best summer I ever had. Wait! I do have one I remember! It was when me and my whole ghetto family from Oakland, including me, all went to Las Vegas! That was a surprise for a lot of us, because we'd never been there. When we went, most all of the boys of the family all had dreads. This was when "hyphy" first came out, when people be "going dumb"!

It was a long ol' ride. I remember us leaving at 2:00 AM and getting there at 5:30 PM. As soon as we got there, we all went swimming — because of the heat! When night hit, all of us youngstas between the ages fourteen and twenty, we all went to the strip, mingling with every "piece of work" we saw! We all liked to pull girls' numbers, so we would go in turn, pullin' the girls we wanted. Then we ran into a flock of pearls, and two of my cousins picked the baddest ones. So I was left with one that told me she played basketball!

Well, at first I didn't even want to talk to her because I kept seeing one that I'd think looked a little better than her — until they said they were in the same hotel as us, and it was called Lady's Luck! So we looked around a little more that night before we met back up with the same girls — and come to find out, the one I had, had the most cakes out of them all! Then everybody was trying to switch girls, 'cause they all said my girl had the most back. So that made her look 100% better to me! Then my cousin Chu-Chu started hatin' because the girl I had was on my line — and he knew I was gon' hit before he did that night.

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you remembered the story you had to tell, you told it! It's amazing how easy writing gets when you realize you have something you want to say. And yeah, that sounds like a pretty darn memorable experience, and you tell the story well. It's funny how you thought your girl was less than, till everyone else thought she was more than — and then you changed your mind, too! Don't we all, all of us humans walking this earth, get foolish about what others think, so much so that it changes what we think, what we want, what we do — and who we want to do it with, too! Funny story, with a lesson to teach as well, 'cause it was the same girl the whole time you were changing your mind.

Should Be Continued

with arsenic eyes i stare into
sending my soul amusement
one woman could kill a man's soul
but a different omnipotence
thinkin' love could only bring my soul alive
then, until sunrise
highlighted
findin' my search into her hurt
with love in my eyes or, maybe, lust of dirt
by show of mistress i show you with my tongue
wipin' my lips
like her dish servin', i'll devour in uneasiness
language speaks with our eyes
my thoughts and hers, unequivocal
she's unflappable, i'm more naturalist
not showing myself naked, more like fulfilled
lustfulness
it's something we shouldn't release
that's why this unknown poem should
be continued

-Lil' Mainy The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you fear it's lust and not love, then your uneasiness mentioned above is the murmur of your heart. From the start, loveless, union leads in the end to total distress. Are you just using her pain, or causing it to rise up again if she but realized, the love she thought to find in you was always already compromised. To be continued, and continually reviewed? Or is there a chance love that was lost can be renewed. At what cost?

This World

We livin' in this world
With killin' and hittin' girls
Back hand to her face
Knockin' em out like mace
Ninjas doin' it for fun
Until they're locked up or on the run
Hidin' in different places
Disguisin' in different faces
Until they popped or dropped
Layin' six feet with the rocks
Covered in dirt
Getting blamed for all of the hurt
For the killin' they did
And mistreatin' their kids
I bet every other ninja wished he had one wish
To go back and change his life
From wrong to right
Make up for bad days and what they call good night's
'Cause that's what you need to do if you wanna succeed
in this world
Be a leader not a follower and just stack your bills
(legitly)
'Cause it's hard growin' up as a youngsta
Nobody there, nobody doin' nothing for you
You been on your own since day one or day two
You got a gun thrown to you like what it do
Tryin' to survive in this world that we livin' in
Crazy people out committing crimes like killin'
Actin' like a villain
So I stop in like a super hero
And that hundred crimes to zero
Ninjas think they hard 'cause they up in the hood
Until they find that day which is rest in peace
And they'll close their eyes and hopefully stay asleep
No more walkin' around and no more eyes to see
Only a glowing shadow with wings
Soarin' around the world just try to find me
To whisper in my ear "There's a place with peace"
But I could only get there if just try and be me
Livin' good and right up in harmony
So I'ma take my time and ask everybody why
Why do them foolish crimes?

Yeah what's up with it Beat, this is your boy Young Loomy comin' back at you for the second time, so yeah what's with ya? Well I'm gone...

-Young Loomy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're sorry you're back in the hall, but we're glad you're sharing your genius flows with us. You are telling some important tales, and you know how to spit meaningful rhymes. Step up as a teacher, and you'll live a longer life.

My Life Was Like A Playstation

One thing that happened in my life that I never thought would happen was coming to jail. I never thought I would commit a serious crime that would put me in the system for a long time.

It was like playing a Playstation after the first time I got out. It's like the crimes were so fun and the money was so good that it just kept me going and going, but now they're trying to do me something crucial.

I just sit in my room everyday and just think about what I'm going to do when I get out.

-Lil' Dee, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The system will do you — so take this experience as a sign that you can take your life into your own hands. There are things that give thrill and satisfaction besides crimes. We hope you can find, and enjoy those things — and enjoy your freedom! Now tell us what will you do upon getting out?

It's Amazing What The Lord Can Do For You!

every time you pray to him your dream comes true.
 be good to him and he'll be good to you.
 learn about him from parents, guardians or school.
 the lord is wonderful in many different places,
 he loves each and every one of you, even the newborn faces.
 when i deserve less, he offers more and more.
 he allows me to wake up in the morning,
 breathe, instead of staying asleep and walking through
 those huge wide doors.
 and for that i love him and accept him as my lord and
 savior,
 but he also wants me to do him a big important favor.
 which is to do right, which i will, from here on till the rest
 of my life!

-R-man, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your faith is a gift, because not everyone has what you have. After you've proven how easy it is to believe in yourself and do right, we hope you can share your wisdom and experience with others.

It's Difficult Walking A Mile In My Shoes

If you were walking in my shoes, it would be pretty difficult. I did make a lot of mistakes in my life, and that's why I'm here — but I learned from them.

If you were walking in my shoes, you wouldn't see much, because all I did was stay around my neighborhood with friends and make the choices that I did, some of which were good. You would meet a lot of outgoing people, loving people and very, very smart people. You would hear a lot of yelling because all the kids around, make their parents go "crazy"!

You would go skating outside my house or skate to parks a couple blocks away or around the corner to a school to go play some sports. You would smell a lot of skunks, even during the day. You would also do a lot of walking. My shoes are going to lead you through some trouble, but you will get tired of it, and finally straighten your life up.

-Juan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You really take us on a walk through your life in your neighborhood, and it's a great ride, even if you left out a lot of the bad stuff that has you getting tired of the trouble you went through. We feel as if we just rode your skates, flying through your life and your 'hood — and yeah, there was a lot that's good, with much more to come after you've straightened out your life and start doing what's right. 'Cause you've got some great people in your sight!

something out of Nothing

What's up wit' it Beat, this is Onio, keepin' it lit. We struggle every day trying to make ends meet, in a world that doesn't have a whole lot of love for us.

We do what we can when we can in hopes of a better tomorrow that never seem to come. We do what we have to do in order to get the things we need for ourselves as well as our love ones. Whether you hustle, pimp, whore or pull heist, I feel you.

This here goes out to my loved ones lost in the struggle we call street life.. Friends, for my ninjas that's still here, keep ya heads up and let's make something outta nothing.
RIP Ju-Ju and RIP MAT

-Onio, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This could almost be a speech... we wish the world could hear it, because it's true. That struggle to just make it in this world, to eat, to stay alive, to make it across the street without violence, is something a lot of Americans don't understand... but here's our question, Ohio. How. You and other people like you deserve like much more than you've gotten so far, but then, there's all that violence between people that should be banding together to help each other rise up. What would it take to build unity in the hood? Is that a possibility, or just a dream? You tell us.

A Tough Mile In My Shoes

Walking a mile in my shoes is like walkin' through
a world of crime, different feelings. Walking in my
shoes is walking through death valley.

Walking out of the house I have to stay with the thought

that I could get shot, am I going to get robbed.

What is going to happen.

What is going to happen.

I'm not scared. That's the life I chose.

I'm a gangmember and I love it but if I could change it I would.

I've seen a lot of death, family and friends. It hurts when I think about it.

-Smokey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Look, you can change your mind. Just 'cause you chose something once, doesn't mean you can't choose something else tomorrow. It's all about how you communicate the choice to the homies, making sure they know your love and respect for them, and that you aren't dissing their choices. Men have left the gang life before, and lived to tell the tale without any fear. Find one, befriend him, and ask for help. Because you can change it, if you are determined to find the path.

A Walk In My shoes

A walk in my shoes? Okay, a youngsta set loose to be his own man as a young teenager. I'm a young man that loves to live good. Have something going for me real good, but go through hectic stuff everyday. Use to kickin' with my boys, plotting on a come up. I have a dream I wanted to accomplish but my society and lifestyle holds me away from it.

Boom!!! I came up, so called, "eatin'". Then I realize while I'm driving around on cloud nine, it wasn't enough. I want much more. It's militant when you on your own and have needs. I feel like it's me and my boys, but then I wake up. Most of them in jail, then I am. I start to notice stuff around me on the outs is played out, on top of that the rest of my patnas comin' in, nearly everyday.

This street stuff don't lead to nothing, but riskin' your life, so now I'm thinking ahead, and practice on keeping a cool head, noticing I have potential.

The funny thing is it feels good.

-Lil' Chris, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Lil' Chris, you finally see the light! Now the hard part is preventing yourself from making the same mistakes. Just know that it will be a process. Nothing will change completely overnight. Keep your mind on your goals, and when you accomplish those, it will feel great! Use your potential, you've got so much!

A Gift For Life

I had a friend, he was my best friend. We used to play basketball at Fremont High, and he got shot in the neck. When my brother called me and told me that he got shot I was mad. I was going to kill myself but I didn't. The saddest thing I own is a hat my best friend gave me. He made that hat and I'm never going to forget him.

-Dominic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Such a tragedy! What made you choose life, over death, when you were shocked with the grief of your friend's death? The temptation to end the pain is understandable, though we all know one man's death becomes another's pain - your death would have caused so much pain for your friends and family. We are glad you chose life! What made you make that choice?

Young Bullet

to start off, well
a young bullet — a bullet
do not have no name on it
no, when people get shot
you never know who
the bullets were for
it doesn't even matter who
try to hit the target they shootin' at
sometime bullet be hittin'
other people who just trying
to get out of the way
but you know how it is
but ... but it ain't really
got nothing to do wit' me
but by the time y'all get this
i will probably be gone from here
but y'all stay up

-Quail, 150 Crew

From The Beat: As we respond to this piece, we read in the news that two fourteen year olds in Oakland got shot to death, on in the East and one in the West, by bullets aimed at them. No one deserves to get shot to death in the street, for sure no one that young! Be part of the solution not part of the problem.

Y'all Wouldn't Make it If You Tried

I was raised by thugs
School'd by killas
Learned my mathematical skills
From real life drug dealers
-Tupac

What's up wit' it, this Lil Troublesum comin' at y'all stupid mang, y'all wouldn't make it in my shoes if y'all even tried. But let me give y'all a rundown on how I do thangs in my part on Hayward.

Look, all I'ma tell y'all it's nothing nice, you'll see all types of scandalous acts bein' pulled, and that product bein' moved. Everybody and they mommas tryin' to get that money or just another high. Everywhere you walk you'll see a hood individual holdin' it down, doin' what they gotta do to see better days. Now you wanna go post up and see who comes and who leaves from the avenue, you'll be in my front porch wit' a mug on yo' face holdin' a big thang in yo' pants.

There's only certain individuals that post up in my front porch through everyone else gotta kick rocks and find they own honey comb hideout. If I was to walk out of here and hit the hood right now the scenery wouldn't be like I've described.

Every individual I'd consider a loved one is doin' time fo' the hood. So I guess that's something sad (talkin' 'bout yo' other beat topic this week) ... there's hood figgaz in the outs as I speak, doin' they thug thang they either positive or negative, and I ain't mad at 'em at all. Free all the hood figgaz. Let that be da reason...one love

-Lil' Juanito, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This reads like a guided tour through hell, well done. We can feel the rhythm of your life, of the street, we can feel why it becomes so important to band with other people for protection, we can feel the despair, and we can feel the stress. Do you think that if the judge, the da, anyone in the system, had to spend a week in your shoes, that it would change how you and other youthful offenders were perceived? Also, what happens when you try tried to put yourself in someone's shoes? Do it now - imagine your worst enemy, and what you know of his life, and the streets he walks, and ask yourself, how different is he from you? How different is the world he came up in?

You Couldn't Last a Day in My County Chucks

Saludos Beat, my honor and embracements to all doin' their time like a champ. We stand tall through it all!

As to this topic: on the real, you couldn't last a day in my county chucks. All the bloodshed, and tears for this lifestyle that I'm living. Come and see things first hand from my point of view. Through my eyes see blue and red lights from black and whites. Forever lookin' around the corner for jealous rivals.

Through these eyes witness comrades from an age of 7, 8, 9, 10 grow up to be a combine that consumed poison and sished? out slugs. See a youngster all bloody on the floor screamin' for help from just being sliced from a machete. Through these eyes watch yer best friend, yo' boy, grow up to love the poison he ejects in his veins and inhales through his lungs, more than you, and the homeboys.

While yer standing in my chucks, listen to the sounds of forever shots blarin' through the block, hear the screams of a homeboy laid out as the tires screech, soak in the sounds of a mother cursing God for the system swallowing her boys.

Feel the gunpowder settle on yer burners after each blast from the barrel, feel the heat on your palms as you grip the pistol, feel the adrenaline rush after each kick, feel yer arm, extended arm level.

Through these county chucks it's almost like I'm forever running, forever hittin' fences, jumpin' through windows, and hidin' in backyards, jus' so I can keep from getting' paddywacked.

Try wakin' up every day, knowin' that you had nothing to do with the circumstances yer facin', three hundred plus days in the county and that's no where near what you're facing if you lose. It's all or nothin'. All hope and faith was lost when you heard yer brother was in the process of being wasted for the second time.

Serio pedo, I'm livin' life through one eye! Ain't no regrets, no remorse, this life is like a bullet...only one life one shot, but best believe me I'm goin' out wit' a bang!!

-Young Shorty, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The human condition is one where we are all prisoners of our own consciousness. Bars or no bars, each of us sees the world from our point of view - we're alone, at the end, but what we have to try and bridge that infinite gap is love, imagination, compassion, art - and of course, the words we write to try and communicate. It's almost like the gap can't be crossed, but we try and cross it anyway, try with all our might, and it's that trying that makes us human. The details you write here about your friends and loved ones, what you've seen, are heartbreaking, but they also show new things about who you are, what you've been through, what you (and other young people in similar situations) are up against. The stories are desperate, but the telling of them gives hope.

Para Los Latinos

Esto es para los Latinos que estan en este pais. Quiero decirles que no se metan en las pandillas y que luchen por lo que es bueno, que no hagan las cosas mal porque así tal vez no les van a dar los papeles. Por eso por favor no se metan en problemas porque tambien es dificil estar en una cárcel. Por favor hagan las cosas bien porque somos Latinos y hay que demostrar a la sociedad que somos buenos. ¡Que viva la raza Latina!

From The Beat: Esperamos que te escuchen y que aprendan que la vida es muy dificil en este mundo. Esperamos que nuestra gente Latina se ponga las pilas y hagan un cambio en esta vida. No hay que dejar que nadie los heche abajo ni que hablen mal a espaldas. ¿Que podria tu gente hacer para mejorar la forma como la sociedad en este pais los miran?

For All The Latinos

This is for all the Latinos that are in this country. I want to tell y'all not to get yourselves in gangs and to fight for what is good and to not do bad things because if y'all do, maybe they won't give y'all your papers. That's why please: Don't get yourselves in problems because it's also difficult to be in jail. Please, do the right things because we're Latinos and we have to show society that we are good people. May the Latin race live!

-Anonymous, Marin

From The Beat: We hope that they listen to you and that they learn that life is very difficult in this world. We hope that our Latin people step their game up and make a difference in this life. Y'all shouldn't let anyone put y'all down nor allow anyone to talk bad behind your backs. What could your people do to improve the way the society in this country see y'all?

Running a Mile

Walkin' a mile in my shoes would be hard
Walkin' a mile in my shoes would be sad
Walkin' a mile in my shoes you would see police
violence

Walkin' a mile in my shoes
You would see a young girl soliciting sex
Walkin' a mile in my shoes you would see young kids
dying
Walkin' a mile in my shoes would actually be running
a mile

-Big Joeda, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You know what's the problem with this poem? There isn't one — except you leave us hungry. You dazzle us with this talent, and start us seeing, really seeing what you go through, with heart and simplicity, and you leave us fiending for more (especially with that terrific line, you say it all). Like turning on the radio to catch the last 30 seconds of your favorite song, or showing up at the end of your favorite tv show, just when the credits role. Don't be stingy with your enormous talent, Joe — we're ready.

Bring People Together

If I didn't have to worry about money I'll always look out for my family and the people in the world. I would try and bring people together and invest in people. Without money there would be less killing in our communities and more peace. I think people wouldn't have to worry about selling drugs so people wouldn't have nothing to sell. I would travel the world, go to college, study and try and make the world a better place.

-Samra B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We really like the fact that if you were freed from money worries you'd turn your attention to the welfare of others. That shows that you have empathy which is a wonderful human quality to have. Where would you like to travel in the world? Who would you take with you? What do you want to study in college? What kind of work do you want to do eventually?

Message To The Hood

The message that I would send to my people is — stop the violence!

To the parents letting their kids do what they want, I want to say: Where's the discipline? I'm not saying you have to beat them. What I'm saying is — don't let them let them get away with everything!

Nowadays fourteen and fifteen year old kids are carrying guns. Black people are dropping like flies left and right. Instead of going against each other we need to stick together. Stop the violence, and the world will be a better place.

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Just last week two fourteen year olds were shot dead in the streets of Oakland. Yeah, we need to stop the violence. And if just saying so doesn't help, neither does silence.

Bullets Don't Have A Name

bullets don't have a name
someone can drive by
and they can be lookin' for
someone you know
and just start shootin'
and it can hit you
and the bullet wasn't for you
that's how easy you can lose yo' life
and you can be riding on the next ninja' spot
and they think you' someone they funk in' with
and just start shootin' at the car
and you can lose yo' life
like my ninja meach
he was just sittin' on the block
and some ninja came past
lit the spot up
r i p meach
and i'm his real ninja
brother from another mother

-Lil' Webbie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This piece is so sad, and it lays bare the fear that lies in the back of the mind of every single person posted up on the block, whether they're busting knocks or not — but if you stay there hour after hour trying to make some money off the street or whatever, you just make yourself a target for flying bullets intended for whomever. Get off the street. Get involved in something after school. Get some kind of little job to put money in your pocket, and it keeps you off the spot, too. RIP Meach.

Decisions

I got too much pride
ta let shhh slide
but as I grew up things changed in my eyes
when it go down
I be down ta ride
but I've realized that decisions is to choose from two sides
it's to live or to die

-Jay Nicc B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You've framed the question very well — to live or to die? All we're waiting for is your answer...

If I Didn't Need Any Money

If I didn't need any money, I would help the people that helped me when I was empty-handed, and I would especially help my family out. To tell you the truth, I don't even respect half the people in my family, because I'm on my own right now — and they are not helping me with my needs.

But, being the generous and kind person that I am, I wouldn't have any choice but to help my family out. I would move all of my family members out of the 'hood and into some nice, suburban houses, where I don't have to worry about drugs and violence. I would also help my friends out.

-Young D, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You do sound like a generous and kind person. Why do you think your family is not helping you now that you're on your own? Also, why limit your kindness and generosity to family and friends?

My Future Plans

I plan to use my incarceration time wisely to better myself fo' when I do go back out into society. The system can't hold me fo' ever unless I choose to let them by doing stupid wrong things that will lead me back behind prison walls, 'cause I'll be over eighteen when I get out.

But yeah, I want to walk out those gates as a free man with a bunch of degrees that can get me into something positive and help me do the right thing fo' my own lil' family and my siblings and my parents. I will prove to the system that they judged me wrongly and that I do fit into society.

I want to own my own barber shop, with a massage place, and a lil' beauty salon fo' the ladies — all in one! Also I will do real estate and stuff on the side. That's just some things I want to look into, to keep me focused on doing the right thing on the outs. But I will be successful in anything I do, if I just give it my all to accomplish whatever I set my mind to do.

-Drew, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can see you now expanding your barber shop with a beauty salon and then a spa with massage rooms — a one-stop shop for looking and feeling better! Write us about what sort of vocational training is offered at CYA. If anyone can make the best of that place, it's you! We wish you all the best, Drew. Write soon.

Dre

my name is dre
i'm in here
for something i didn't do
me and my brah was
on our way
to the bus stop
and with doors open
and my friends
started lookin' into it
and one of them
tried to start it
i was just lookin'
the police came in
start lookin'
and he stayed at the stoplight
for a long time
next thing i know
it's like twelve cops
talkin' 'bout
get on the ground
i didn't know what
was going on
next thing i know
i'm going to jail
for car jackin'

-Dre, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You couldn't put it more clearly, more simply or more dramatically. Coming up on this piece up next to Lil' Webbie's piece about Meach (RIP) catchin' a bullet intended for someone else — and life in the 'hood is for sure hazardous to your health and freedom just 'cause you might fit the description of or look a little like someone else! Death for Meach and jail time for you — the crime: being a young (black) man in the ghetto. Thanks for your well-chosen words that say so much.

My Momma

My mom is my morning and my night
The white on my rice
The fruit of my loop
The cream in my coffee
The green on my grass
The purple on my tee shirt
The khaki on my pants
The letter in my alphabet
The hair on my head
The baby in my womb
The teeth in my mouth
The stain on champagne draws
That's how much I love my mom

-Rhonda GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a clever and sweet poem, Rhonda. But we have to wonder why someone who loves her mother so much would do the things that allow the system to take you away from her. That suggests that those things are more important to you than your mother is, at least at those times that you're doing them. We know your mother will love reading this poem, but we know she would love it even more if you were willing to sacrifice some of your pleasures in order to avoid being taken from home. After all, she has sacrificed so much for you, maybe it's time to return the favor.

Everybody Got Some Type of Problem

Now, everybody got some type of problem with they mom or dad. Whether it's good or bad, if you know them or not, you got a problem either way it goes.

Now my problem is common for teenagers that got parents that don't really know how to be parents in the first place. My dad, well he ain't never been there for none of his kids, especially me, and he has the nerve to wanna have another baby. It ain't much I can say about him but useless.

Now my mom, I give her props for trying to raise me without my father, but she at the end when I'm getting close to adulthood. She start failing starting at age 15, but the real problem started a little earlier when I was around the age of 11 or 12.

When I was in the sixth grade my mom got diagnosed with kidney cancer and my grandmother got diagnosed with spinal bifida and was disabled, so I had no choice but to stay home and take care of them. So I really didn't have a childhood and that was one of the first scars I got. I grew up fast with the knowledge of a 40-year-old at the age of a new teen, only because I stayed around adults 24/7.

When I did go outside to play with some of the kids in the neighborhood I started to notice that I was much more mature than them, and I begin to hang around people older than me 'cause they understand where I was comin' from. I spent most of my time in the house, couldn't go out because my mom was so used to me being up under her that she didn't want to let me leave.

(To be continued...)

-Chynna GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It sounds like you grew up really fast, Chynna. What are some of the things you learned from taking care of your mother and grandmother? What are the biggest challenges you face as their caregiver? What are some of the things you think you missed out on growing up so fast? When you say your dad wants another baby, do you mean with your mother? How does she feel about that?

Sarita (aka Ri-Ri)

S is for selfless, such a sweetheart
A is for achiever, so talented and smart
R is for radiant, a heart of pure gold
I is for innocent, a loving soul
T is for treasured, gift from above
A is for affectionate, precious and loved

Originally by my mommy, thank you for your poetic side without it I wouldn't be the great writer I am today.

-Ri-Ri, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Beautiful, poetic family. Where is mom today?

Mi Vida

Si yo no tubiera que preocuparme por el dinero seria lo más facil en la vida. Por ejemplo: Estubiera con mi hermano, con toda la familia, también viera por mi futuro y todo fuera más feliz. También trataría de ayudar a los demás gente que tiene necesidad porque sé que Dios me lo iba a agradecer. También me la pasaría de compras disfrutando de mi vida y ayudando a la gente pobre porque yo sé que así como ellos necesitan de mí, yo también podría necesitar de ellos.

From The Beat: En esta vida no se necesita dinero para estar con los seres querido que uno tiene, pero lo que si se puede hacer con el dinero es ayudar aquellos quienes estan muriendo de hambre por falta de recursos economicos. Hay mucha gente en muchos paises pobres que se estan muriendo de hambre y desearian comerse la comida que nosotros tiramos a la basura. Esperamos que cuando crezcas busques en como hacer algo para ayudar a los demás.

My Life

If I didn't have to worry about money, it would make my life so much easier. Like for example: I'd be with my brother, with my entire family, and I would also look out for my future and everything would be much happier. I would also try to help other people who are in need because I know that God would appreciate what I would be doing. I would also spend my time shopping, enjoying my life, and helping out poor people because I know that just like they need help from me, I, too, could one day need help from them.

-Elvin B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: In this life, you don't need money to be with the loved ones that you have, but what can be done with money is help those who are dying from hunger due to a lack of economic resources. There are lots of people in many poor countries who are dying from hunger who would love to eat the food that we throw in the garbage. We hope that when you grow up, you try to find a way so you can help others out.

My Momma

My mom, she is the one who really understands me. She forgives for all the stuff I've caused. She carries my whole family. She is one of the strongest person I've ever known. She's done a lot for me. She's so supportive for whatever I want to do. She's one of the ones I love the most. And of course I love my dad and my brother too.

My mom is the one I will go to when I'm in trouble or when I just need to talk. She helps me through all that troubles me. And she helps my friends too. She tried her best on everything. When I think of all she's done for me, makes me think, what have I done for her? All I do is make her worry. I never had a chance to thank her for all of her hard work she had done to make my family run smoothly. I really want to go out before Mother's Day so I can thank her for all she's done.

I really miss my mom. I've never been so far away from her. It's been so long since I've been home. But I still get to see her every day. Every time I see my mom and dad, I wish I'd never done something this stupid that got me in here. The worse thing about being here is because I can't see my mom, my dad, my brother, my dog and my cute little kittens.

-Tiffany GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's good to hear you have so much love and respect for your mom. Even if you can't see her on mother's day, what will you do when you get out to show her how much you care about her? If you know that you're here for something "stupid," then it shouldn't be hard for you to stop doing it. That would be the best Mother's Day present you could possibly give, because it would mean you are putting an end to doing the things that allow you to be taken from your loving mother. She deserves better.

The Same Message

The reason I say that, is because a lot of people don't get the message: Stay out of jail! Do what ever you got to do, the right way!

A lot of people say, "I'm not coming back;" or, "I can't get caught!" But it always happens — you're going to slip. Like my bra-bra's, they know who they are, they ran from Camp. Two of them came back with eleven burglaries. It's over, bra! And the other two ran, but they came in on one violation, which was escape from Camp.

But anyways, man, we can't waste our life here! So please, get the message! Don't come back! Your family misses you, your friends too, and your mom, the one who made you. Don't let them down. Let them be able to say, "My son turned his life around, and he's grown into a good man!" — and not a good criminal! So get the message: Don't come back.

-Lil' Sunny D, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is one of the best short essays we've ever printed, even if it is the "the same [old] message" — 'cause you not only say it with passion, you also give a true life example of those close to you, and, in a way, close to everyone reading your piece, Camp veterans and fellow detainees of the 150 Crew, especially. You write with so much truth, feeling and sense; yet we know most of our readers won't feel you ... till it's too late.

Walkin' A Mile In My Shoes Is Like Many Others

Walkin' a mile in my shoes, is like walkin' a mile in many peoples shoes. I look at life as if I'm in your shoes, anybody shoes, I look at their problems too.

I look at the difference of me and the other people and I look at the same, nobody's different from no one on the earth animals do not judge each other so why should people? The saddest thing to own would be your anger and your pride. Let it go and you will see. Love one another, peace. World peace. Love all, bye.

From The Beat: Beautifully said. If we could all focus on our similarities and control our emotions, world peace would be possible. Deandre, thanks for the lesson.

-Deandre, 150 Crew

My Momma

My momma is my will to live.

She's my guidance,
my guardian angel and my inspiration.
Yes, she may be annoying at some times,
reminding me to do what's good —
but she only did it out of pure love.

My momma have taken care of me all my life,
and I'd like to thank her by, in turn, taking care of her.
I really feel bad for putting her through all these troubles,
but I want my momma to know that — I love her!

-David, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're sure she knows, but you're right to want to show it in a way that makes her life easier in her latter days. For sure, when it comes to loving parents, turn-about is fair play!

Cats

Man, this ya boy Kionte in 150 Hall. Let me tell you about these sucka mark ninjas that come to the Hall and think they're hard, but on the outs — they are soft as a piece of bread.

Man that fake stuff ain't cool! Don't come to jail and play the hard level if you don't really get down. On Friday, I had a fight wit' a sucka that hit me from the side when I'm just trying to do my time and hit the outs! But it's good. I ain't gon' let him mess up my program. I handle my business. But anyway, just do your program in here and get out. You fake cats need to get yo' mind right and stop doing that hot shhhh!

-Kionte, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are handling it like a man, 'cause it's bad enough that he came at you like that and that he got you into a fight when you're just trying to do a good program and go free — so you don't want to let him keep distracting you from achieving that goal. There will always be fools, fakes and cowards in the world. Just rise above. But also, the ones who really are hard, they need to check themselves, too — 'cause they will never keep their freedom taking that route either. Don't do like either of them — just do yourself.

A Time To Change

Hey what it do, Beat? This is your homeboy from Hayward, California. This topic is about change, not for anybody but for yourself — and for the Lord, Jesus Christ, because the time for all of us is coming soon.

I just want to make the best of my life, make my family happy and also help others make the right decision before they do something bad and, in the long run, get caught — like me.

I also want to see a part of me that wasn't always shady. Like my ex-lady, I thought I was going to be a daddy, but you know how things go. Sometimes it don't always go the way you want it. I just want to make the right choice. Not like others who are doing real time, because there's a thin line between love and hate. Some people are fake. I want to be real not kill, but to make a change happen. I'm out of here.

-Chino, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You say so much in this little piece about what you want. That's the key, too, 'cause we always end up doing what we want; so it's not a matter of just self-restraint but educating your heart and teaching your mind to listen when your heart tells you what you really want. It sounds like you're ready to change, like you've already done some changing on the inside.

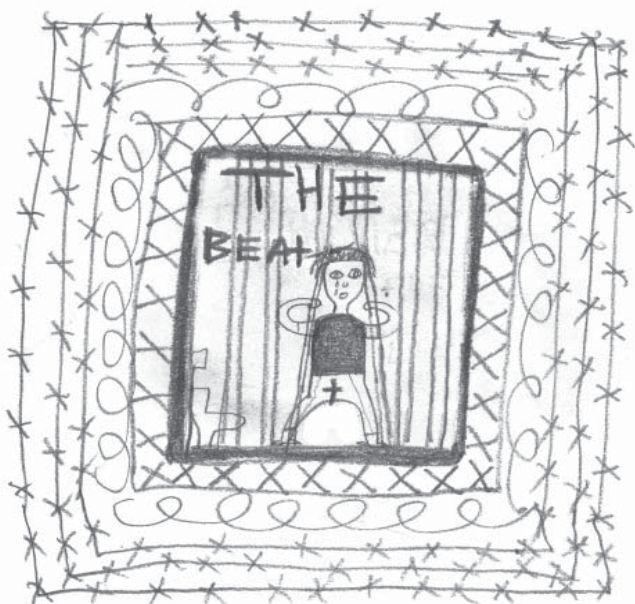
When My Great Grandma Died

The saddest thing that ever happened to me, was when my great grandma died. She was ninety-eight years old and she lived a long time. So that is good. She is in a better world. So that is why I am not mad.

And my cousin died, too. I looked up to him, and before he died, he told me, "You say you got all of these friends, but you don't know who is your friend. One of them will betray you and things will go another way." So after that he told me not to trust nobody. So I don't trust nobody on this earth.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like you trusted him, and that his words will stay with you forever. Probably he meant not to trust anybody in the street game, and he's right. But really, you need to get up out of that life to have friends you can trust. The game is all about "me first" and betrayal, no matter what they say.



Rock In The Road

This time in juvenile hall is a short stop on a long journey to greatness. I've been here six times, but this time I'm really serious about changing.

Honestly I've already changed myself and given up a lot on the outs. But there was also a lot of things, I mean I needed, to get some things together, such as my head — and givin' up smoking and popping. On the outs, I would've never stopped those two, because I was always around the both.

I'm not saying I was on the block or slanging or nothing, just my musician patnas were just like me — always high playing our respective instruments. But by me coming in here, it gave me the chance to sober up and have a fighting chance to be quitting for good. So now I'm able to live a straight-and-narrow life without straddling the fence. (To be continued.)

-T-Bone, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you can learn how to play your music and leave the pills and smoke out of it, you will have succeeded in a taking one giant step on your journey to greatness. Just don't take that first one, no matter what, 'cause (obviously) if you never take that first hit or pill, you won't become an addict again. In the recovery movement, that's always the primary diagnosis — fail to solve the drug problem and you'll fail to solve the others, too, in the end. On the other hand, stay clean and clear-headed and you have a chance to learn how to use your best judgment at all times and make music that is prime — and never have to come back to incarceration for that seventh time.

Not Fun To Walk In My Shoes

It would not be fun to walk in my shoes, because I got a lot of bad things that happened to me in my life. But it might not be fun to walk in somebody else's shoes either, 'cause I don't know what happened to them.

So that's why I am happy to walk in my own shoes. Walking in my shoes, I will change, 'cause I don't want to keep on going the same way that I messed up. I would like to go and change my bad ways and make them good ways.

So to walk in my shoes, you got to be a real person, both to walk the ways I did and to change like I plan. So that is what I got to say about walking a mile in my shoes. And I know I would not like to walk in nobody else's shoes, 'cause I don't want to go through the things that they went through. So, that is all I got to say.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We admire you for seeing past all the bad things that have happened to you and even the bad things you yourself have done, to see that you can learn from your mistakes — replace your bad ways with good ways, and make your life better. Sometimes it seems like living someone else's life would be easier, but we agree with you — at least you know you can get through the bad things that happened to you, 'cause here you are, ready to change!

Humility

I am not used to this kind of stuff, all this yelling and cursing with no response from me. One particular staff is always yelling and cussing, all day long! I thought this staff person was old enough to be past menopause, but obviously not. Most days, I'm able to stay out of this person's way, but there are always them times when it's me this staff person is grilling for something as little as asking for a head call.

But, yeah, had to get that out! Being in here, seriously, has shown me things about myself. I'm able to be humble. On the outs, I'm flashy, belligerent, and just basically arrogant. I like to show off and things like that. In here though, I've learned to sit back and listen, or at least act like I'm listening to my fellow peers talk about being millionaires and other such off-the-wall stories.

I also allow staff and inmates to curse at me, call me all types of names, and not say a word other than "All right," and "Okay," when most of the times, I be in the right, something that would have never happened on the outs, me giving in when I'm right, never! — I guess it's maturity. I think it's wisdom.

It's impossible to win an argument with this staff person. It's actually dangerous to do that. It'll never end. And with staff acting like the 'too upset, it would only make things worse, 'cause then they'll "pencil whip" you and make something minor into something major. They're not dumb! The system could make it seem like you're the Columbine shooter by the time they're done with you.

I keep taking this piece a whole 'nother direction than what I intend to be writing about. Can't you see this is an actual experience? Not literally, I mean, not personally to me, but I have seen it happen to others and heard about it. But here's a word of advice to all readers: You won't win arguments with staff or inmates. It's best to just shut up and let them talk — humble yourself! In the end, if and when later you and the other person ever stop to think about what was said, they're always the ones looking and sounding stupid. That's the truth; plus it builds character.

-T-Bone, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well, that first paragraph didn't sound too humble. It sounded downright arrogant and insolently satirical. But, still, we feel what you're saying about learning how to behave more humbly, keep your silence, not make every unfair word or unjust action into a fight — 'cause you're absolutely right when you point out how if you take that route you will never win and things just get worse in the end. So we wonder if you can keep that arrogance in your musical sound, but in your social interactions continue down this road of turning your life around. We don't mean you should be a doormat when you get out, but there's something to this humility route that can help you escape the system's revolving door — help you stay clean, serene and free forevermore! Meanwhile, thanks for the good advice to fellow readers and writers of The Beat Within.

Soccer Star

What's up, Beat? This your boy, Santiago, from MCJH, showing you some love and to the people who are locked up.

I am going to write to you today about what I miss a lot, like my family and my soccer team.

But one thing that I love a lot is a soccer ball. Soccer is my dream to play like a pro, to be a big star. Before I came in here, I played in a traveling team in Novato. I played for the team since I was ten years old. It was a hella good team. We won lots of games.

Now that I am in the hall, I can even pick up a soccer ball, because they don't have any in here—that make me hella mad.

If I had a chance to become pro, I will do my best. I will help the poor people. I love soccer. Life is a game. Soccer is serious. OK, that all I have time for. Peace.

-Santiago, Marin

From The Beat: Friend, this MCJH experience will stay with you forever, and we can only hope you benefit from incarceration and never return when you get the chance back home. Soccer is an awesome sport. Never stop playing! Get back out there and improve your skills. For now, stretch, stretch and stretch. Exercise is key! We are pulling for you. Do you know anyone going to Germany for the World Cup?

Love Of My Life

out of all the ladies in my life

i really love one
she seen me at sad times
and seen me having fun
she gave me respect
and i barely gave her some
but i gotta have her
like i gotta have sun
she stuck it through wit' me
through it all
she held me up
just as i was about to fall
so now that i'm locked up
behind these walls
she'll always be the first
to get my calls
when i'm sad
she'll be my remedy
and as long as she loves me
i'll live in ecstasy
for her

i will do anything to be free
'cause she's the lady
that gave birth to me
thank you for everything mom
happy mothers day

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You had us thinking it was your love for some girl, and then we realize you're talking about the one who brought you into this world — and has given you love every single day. And each of us has to ask ourselves what we've done to repay the wealth of gifts we've received plus how have we shown love for the woman who conceived us. Belated best wishes to all the mothers of sons and daughters who write and read The Beat.

My First Love

Hey, Beat. What's up? This is Santiago from MCJH and I am going to write to you about my first love. She was the best girl I ever had. When I was down she put me up. She was kind, fine, and smart, all at the same time.

When I broke up with her, I felt hella bad, because she was there for me all the time when I need her. I broke up with her on V-Day. That suck.

She cried. She was hella mad at me. She said to me, "how can you do this to me?" And I said, "I am sorry, baby, but I don't like you anymore." After I broke her heart, I said, "Baby, I am sorry" and said, "I still love you."

Yeah, Beat. I hope you like my story. She was my first love.

-Santiago, Marin

From The Beat: Then what happened? Were you honest with her? Still friends? It is hard to say goodbye, but if the feelings are not there, it is good to communicate just that. Do you feel like you handled it correctly?

Done

to tell the truth
i don't know why i'm here
actually it was 'cause of fear
fear to be called a punk
a sucka or weak
little did i know
i was in too deep
instead of takin' baby steps
i wanted to leap
i was caught red-handed
knife at my feet
man i was trippin'
all for a color
had a lot of people in tears
even my brothers
i didn't mean to hurt two mothers
now i'm locked up
sleepin' wit' these thin lil' covers
man i eff'd up
but what can I do
i did what i did
i acted a foo'
man livin' here
isn't even a little bit cool
now it's time to do my time
the real duel

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This has got to be one of the best little poems we've printed about doing wrong, facing the truth and doing some thinking. One things for sure, we need voices like yours to be heard, 'cause way too many young men are killing and dying for a color that means nothing more than some corporate design — an underground economy recruiting young wannabe's and telling them they're soldiers in a war, but for real, it's all about somebody's drug deal and nothing worth killing or dying for.

What I am Going to Do When I Get Out

When I get out, I am going to eat some good food, get some really fit clothes. When I get out, I am going to change my attitude and not talk back to people. When I get out I am going to go play soccer for, like, 24 hours, because I have not played in, like, three months.

-Santiago, Marin

From The Beat: Good for you! What about school? What about work? How are you going to work on your attitude? Anyone you must apologize to? What will be the hardest part about changing?

instead of takin' baby steps
i wanted to leap

Unmitigated

Proverbs 5:3-5

3: For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey
and her mouth smoother than oil
4: But in the end she's bitter as wormwood
sharp as a two edged sword.
5: Her feet go down to death;
her steps lay hold of hell
from the beginning, we're seeing gaiety
no pity when said, somethin' that hurt me sincerely
my past is not accepted, one mistake and she recedes
after such step, i cry, remembering how much
achieved
my mind accepts your disappearance, but yet my heart
receives
its last step — my heart tries to regenerate
knowin' if seein' you again everything would relegate
who i am to be, a secure passion
leftover feelings, is now a separation
now my memory is selective
so that my love is tentative
now my loneliness is unobtrusive

-Lil' Mainy The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: She was not immoral, it seems, except to hold you responsible for your mistaken schemes. To err is human, to forgive divine. And so your love, frozen in time, stands eternal as the lines of the verse you quote, as floating off unobtrusively a lover's hell your heart floats. Tentative? Rather the heart heals even as the grieving lover kneels in a pool of tears. Ya hear?



What Do I Miss About Home

what do I miss about home?
everything —
i miss my family
i miss my street family
i miss my female
i miss the smell of my house
i miss having to clean my house
i even miss my toilet overflowing
like i said
i miss everything
'cause all of it means
— i'm free!

-Scotty Do-Wop, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well put! Even bad things seem good when they're seen as part of a world of freedom. Taken as a whole, everything you thought you could do without, now you need 'em. So, what part of your life had you bound to lose your freedom.

Words From A Missin' Brother

(to my lil' sister, Toni)

first, this here, is love of a charm
my first sister— i miss you
a blessed child cold from the world
but you'll stay warm
independent at twelve
ha! — i realize that such beauty
will always stay real
never gave a dude your body
didn't die, the heart you have
they tell me, two months to do right in here
then finally be home,
i'm the warrior for us
to get our daily wrongs
i love you
a best friend of a virgo
(smiles) could make anybody smile or laugh
it's the way you cry fo'
far reachin' of somethin' so simple
at least we could take it that way
if i messed up today
so far, for years i will be in y-a.
it came to this point
we haven't been together for so many years
only a heart could cry tears
sweet dreams baby sis'
i miss you
remember my word will always be there
and so that dream's wish
our hearts live to prove our soul for this
i love you sis'

-Lil' Mainy The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Ah, a poem to console a younger sister who needs you so much, and though you won't be there for her to see and touch, she now has your words to hold and lean on as a crutch when life feels all too messed up. Ah, tears do testify to the heart's desire, and that can fire you up to do what you need to do and to get through what you need to get through to be home again — and show your sister how you can be a warrior and do right from now till forever, so alone again you leave her never, a brother and best friend evermore for the sister you adore.

Looking Out My Window

i picked this because i remember
the last time i was here
they gave us this same topic
but looking out my cell window
i can't see nothing
'cause you can't see out the window
except the brightness of the sun
and maybe my reflection

-Scotty Do-Wop, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sorry to see you back on lock up, writing about the same old topic. It's not much of a view from your room. So what was the chain of events that brought you back so soon. One thing hasn't changed, a topflight poet you remain.

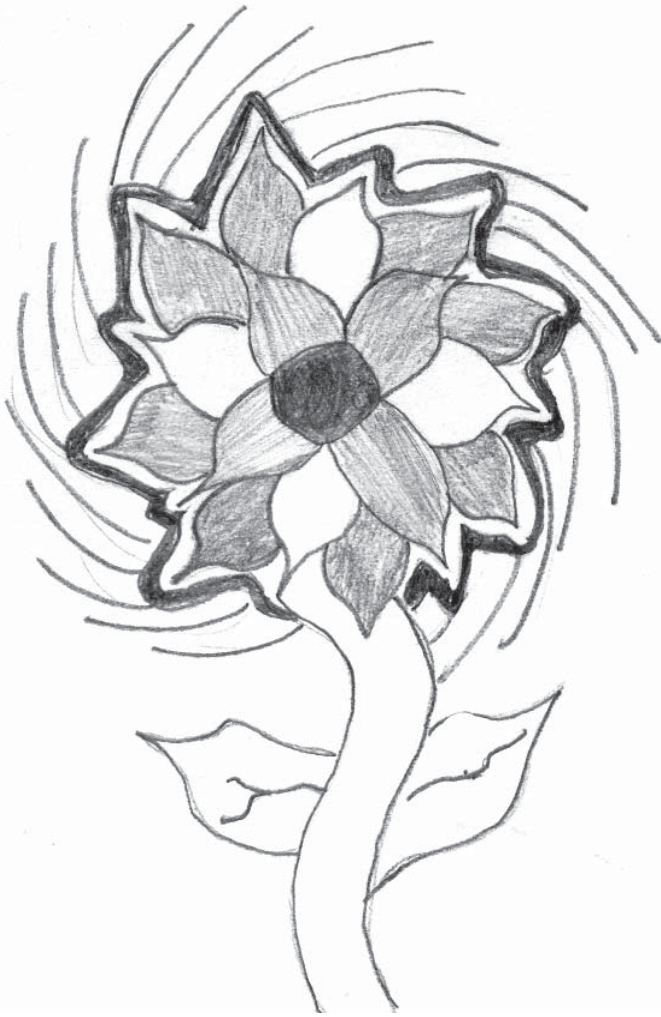
The Navy

I let my mom talk me into going to the Navy — if the judge don't give me a strike, and they let me go to a program to finish my GED studies. Yeah, so, if they do, i'm going to have to get used to saying "Sir! Yes, sir!"

RIP to my loved ones, especially my loving brother.

-Scotty Do-Wop, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Maybe that sort of external structure is what you need to keep you on track. So get that GED, and do what you need to do in order never to come back to lock up, Scotty Do-Wop!



Check This Out

It ain't nothin' to me than just a lil' bit
 Grumpy Rich locked up again for some other type of shhh
 California resident Redwood City hustlin'
 Player in this game of life 'cause I can't get enough of it
 I won't never trust a chicken head, no need to explain
 They look pretty on the outside but their brain is plain insane
 Keep it real baby girl, everybody hates the world
 If you hate the way I'm rappin' it ain't even a concern
 And forget all these punks
 An' suckas livin' in my town
 And them females who be hatin' tryna put you down
 Every day all day they think of what to say
 To a G who don't give a care about 'em anyway
 It's hella coo' if you try to get your rap on
 You know where we get our sacks on, homey
 Around broads who act phony
 Everybody tryna come up
 You ain't the only one

-Grumpy Rich

From The Beat: You express some powerful anger in this poem, Grumpy, but we're not sure it's directed at the right audience. It sounds to us like you are denouncing all females because of your own bad (but limited) experiences. One thing about making generalizations based on limited knowledge is that if you had a bad experience, you're likely to think of all experience (in that area) as bad. What we urge is that you let that very fertile, very creative, and very impressive mind of yours be open to the possibility that there are experiences you have not yet had, and that those future experiences should instruct your life as much as the ones that are behind you.

When you quit smoking or if you do,
 you start feelin' alive again, like
 you wanna improve on yourself.

The Best Summer I Ever Had

The best summer I ever had was the one when I was at a foster home with an old lady and four of my homeboys. The whole summer we ran around downtown San Francisco and hit licks. We bought hella weed (which I just stopped smoking), and I rolled so much my fingers ached, I swear on everything. We used to just run around hella high and laugh at every little thing and eat Burger King or go to the movies.

That was the first summer that I really had any fun 'cause I used to have no money and no one to help me get some. But when I switched foster homes I had hella fun. I think this summer might be my funnest ever though 'cause when I get out of juvie I'm getting taken in by one of my best friend's mom. She lives in a good neighborhood and she will trust me more 'cause I'm changing my old ways. When you quit smoking or if you do, you start feelin' alive again, like you wanna improve on yourself.

I'm sitting in juvie, freedom gone 'cause I wanna be crazy and run around and act like other people's shhh is mine and take it from them. When I get out, I gotta repeat my grade 'cause I missed star testing and I'm gonna be at a new house with a new school and a new chance... and I'm gonna make it.

-J

From The Beat: You know, J, we believe you are going to make it. It sounds like something has happened to you to make you realize not only that you can't justify the lifestyle you were living (stealing other people's property, for example), but also that staying high only held you back from moving forward with your life. Don't be fooled into thinking that a "good neighborhood" won't also present you with the same temptations you used to fall for but now want to avoid. Real freedom requires real responsibility to keep. We believe you're going to keep yours, and we're behind you all the way!

Best Summer

The best summer I ever had is my 7th grade summer. I went everywhere that summer. I first went to the water slides and went on mostly every ride. We almost got into a fight there.

Next I went to Great America and I got sick and threw up everywhere. Then I went to the summer games. I saw a lot of people I know. I saw a lot of famous people. That's the best summer I ever had.

-Martin

From The Beat: Wow, your best summer included throwing up everywhere... We won't even ask you about your worst summer...

Things In Life

Life is a very short word for a very long definition.

Life is an experience that God gave us.

Life changes in every minute and every hour.

Life is very tricky and picky.

Life could be very wonderful and exciting.

But in some situations it could be hell and unexpected.

Things in life are very difficult,

so what I do is just sit back and enjoy the moments that I'm living.

Life could take away things that you have.

Like I said, life is unexpected.

All I'm trying to say is that life can get you bad.

So don't be sad when you wake up and everything went bad

-Gorda

From The Beat: Well, we're not sure about that final advice because we think everybody would be sad if everything went bad. The trick is to keep things from going that bad in the first place. It sounds like you love life enough to want to stay in it, which means you may want to figure out a few new ways of doing things so those unexpected turns in life don't bring you down.

The Saddest Thing I Own

The saddest thing I own is the memories of my past.
I regret most of the things I did. I have to stop hiding myself in this conforming mask.

I hurt my family. I lost my best friend.
I made too many mistakes. It's too much to mend.
I got drunk and I did drugs.

Now all I want is my mom's comforting hug.
Now I'm stuck behind juvenile hall's bars,
realizing now I have to stop. I've gone too far.

I look back at all the things I did.

I never imagined myself feeling like this when I was a little kid.
I have memories of me and my little sister, running around.
I was never there to remember my family members that were 6 feet under ground.

I've done too much. I don't think I can last.
I'm still that little girl, stuck in my past.

-Corrine

From The Beat: No, Corrine, you are not still a little girl — even though that little girl will always be a part of who you are. This poem tells us that you are maturing into responsible adulthood. You can't undo the things you regret, but you can start anew and begin to build on success and accomplishments that are clearly within your ability to achieve. You are in juvenile hall, but you are not stuck here. This is merely a temporary resting place as you survey the damage you've left behind you, and let it instruct you as look with bright hopeful eyes at what lies ahead.

Not Going Back

Days go by waiting 'till my release
Waiting for a letter

Not letting my memories
Pass through my mind

Don't know what's going on out there
Not knowing what's gonna happen
with me

Dreaming of those who made me feel
so comfortable

Making sure our love will stay alive
Even though we are apart

Both being behind bars
Not looking back of those who made
me cry

Changing my life just for my mom
and my husband
Not going back
Just looking forward

-Dreamer

From The Beat: We're glad you're looking forward and not letting your past bring you down. But we hope you add one more person to the list of those you want to change for. As important as it is to change for your mom and boyfriend, it's much, much more important that you change for yourself.

A Deep Thought

A pear
It grows
It lives
It falls
Leaves

They grow
They live
They fall

I grew
I lived

But I don't want to fall...
Another deep thought brought
to you by

-Mack

From The Beat: Well, we missed the earlier "deep thoughts" (you said this is another), but from the depth of this thought, it is not hard for us to believe that others have sprung from the well of your mind. Unlike a pear or a leaf, if you fall you can always get back up and move forward.

The Saddest Thing I Ever Owned

Possessions leave the brain with distinctive memories
Sometimes the thought of death or even animosity
For me it wasn't the love of a friend or a feel of a kiss

My feelings will never erase including that I wish
The black rosary that sits in my bed is the memory
That my brother is way past the diseased or dead
His spirit lives within me and the precious skies

With the thought of his memories withhold the tears from my eyes
The wish that somehow never became the real or truth

Is what still corrupts the depths of my mind and will never heal or soothe
His memory lives within the necklace around my neck

It's my security and my life as a cashed check

So cash me in, I'm dying with this chain even if I'm six feet deep

I know that I kept my promise even in my eternal sleep

The love of a brother will never vanish or disappear

I look to the heaven and feel his warm touch and know he's near

So when I look at the chain I hold dear and close

I stop and think about bad memories because he was down for me the most

-Lil' Leche

From The Beat: It's tragic that you have lost your brother at such an early age. But, as you write so movingly here, you haven't really lost him at all, you hold him near to you at all times. We hope you will consider that your life is now all the more valuable, since you keep him alive as long as you live. That should give you reasons enough to sacrifice the things that cause you to lose your freedom (and maybe risk losing a lot more), and do the things that will not only keep you safe and free, but will move your life in a new direction.

Mi Vida Loca

La Gorda: Mi vida es una vida bien loca, pasa por mi calle y ni sabes lo que te toca. La vida que vivo es una de las vida que nadie quiere vivir. Por eso yo trato de cambiarla pero esta bien difícil.

Lil' Stranger: Yo trato de cambiar pero mis enemigos nos me dejan. Por eso no voy a parar de vivir esta vida. En mi barrio hay puro homies que les vale madre todo. Yo me puse mis puntos porque quiero vivir esta vida loca. Yo he robado y he hecho un chingo de cosas malas. Me han brincado muchas veces y algunas peleas pierdo pero todavia quiero vivir mi vida.

La Gorda: Homies, todos pasan por una vida desmadrosa, pero tienen que cambiar. La vida es un ciclo que solo ustedes pueden cambiar. Piensala bien por ti y tu jefta.

Lil' Stranger: Simon, homita you que todos pasan una vida desmadrosa, pero es difícil cambiar como yo. A mí me gusta vivir la vida loca pero no quiero vivir así toda mi vida. Quiero ser alguien en esta vida. Quiero que mi jefta esté orgullosa de su hijo que es alguien en este mundo, no un cholo maton.

La Gorda: Orale homie, es difícil pero la vida continua.

Lil' Stranger: Simon.

La Gorda: Pues ahí la vemos cuando salgas del Camp. Que Dios te bendiga y este contigo. Orale pues, nomas quiero que sepas que "homeboys siempre se quedan en memoria"

From The Beat: Los dos estan equivocado en cuestion de las pandillas. Sinceramente que los dos estan corriendo riesgo grande de perder sus vida o meterse en muchos problemas. No saben los problemas que esto les ocasionara en sus vidas si no deciden hacer algo al respecto. ¿Apoco no se han puesto a pensar que estan aqui a raiz de las pandilla, sea que estuviesen en el lugar equivocado, hayan participado en alguna actividad negativa. Ustedes saben que hay una salida para todo esto, pero sinceramente no estan convencido de salirse de esto. Quieren seguir este juego y eso es lo que les va a teaar muchas cosas malas en la vida. Esperamos que llegue una luz a sus vidas y los hagan ver que las pandillas no lleban a nada bueno más que a cárcel, hospital o a muerte.

The Life

Gorda: My life is a very crazy life. Pass through my streets and you don't even know what hits you. The life that I live is one of the lives that no one wants to live. That's why I try to change it, but it is very difficult.

Stranger: I try to change, but my enemies don't let me. That's why I am not going to stop living this life. In my 'hood, there is nothing but homies that don't give a damn about anything. I got my tattoo because I want to live this crazy life. I have robbed and I have done a bunch of bad things. I have been jumped several times and I lost a couple fights, but I still want to continue living this life.

Gorda: Homies, everyone goes through an out-of-control life, but y'all have to change. Life is a cycle that only y'all can change. Think about it very well for you and for your mother.

Stranger: Yeah homegirl, I know that everyone goes through an out-of-control life, but it's hard to change like me. I like to live the crazy life, but I don't want to live like that all my life. I want to be someone in this life. I want my mother to be proud of her son because he's someone in this world and not just a bad gangster.

Gorda: Right, homie, it's difficult, but life goes on.

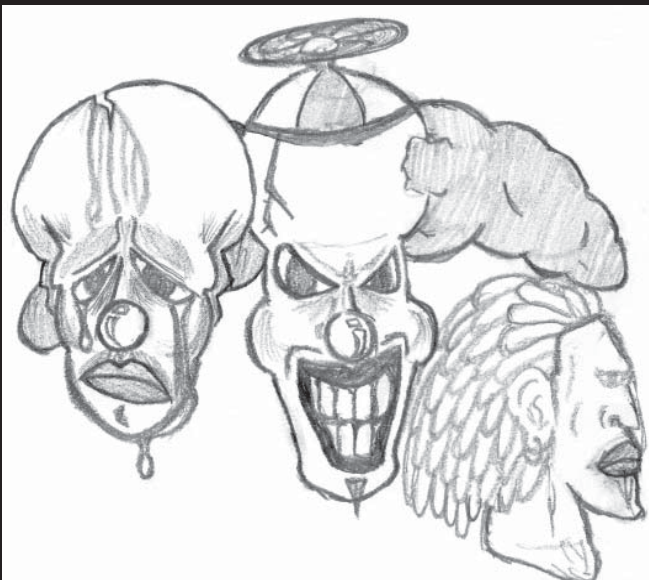
Stranger: Right.

Gorda: Well, we'll see what happens when you get out of Camp. May God bless you and be with you. All right then. I just want you to know that "homeboys always stay in your memory."

Stranger: I'll holla at y'all later.

-Lil' Stranger and Gorda

From The Beat: Both of you are wrong when it comes to gangs. Honestly, both of you are running a huge risk of losing your lives or getting yourselves into many problems. Y'all have no idea the kind of problems that this will bring to your lives if y'all don't try to do something with respect to gangs. Haven't y'all ever thought about the root of why you're in there is because of gangs? You want to continue playing like children without realizing the life-long adult consequences you're likely to bring down on your heads. If being in the Hillcrest box doesn't convince you that this is not the life you want for yourselves, what will it take to do the job?



Is It Sad?

When we think of sad
Does it always mean it's bad?
When we see the item our hearts mush
But we have to give ourselves a push
To move on
But keep the memory alive
Even though we know moving on it's a strive
My homies died
I didn't say goodbye
It's hard and it's sad
So in this case it's very bad

-Nicolasa

From The Beat: You gave us the feeling in the beginning that you were going to give us an example of when sad is not bad. But then, when we came to the end, "sad" and "bad" became one. So, what is that example we thought we were going to get?

The Saddest Thing

The saddest thing I own is all the letters I got from my ex-girlfriend while she was in CYA because every last word of them was lies.

-Grumpy Rich

From The Beat: She was VERY young, Grumpy. So, sad as those lying letters are, we hope you can forgive her and move on.

What Is Love?

Love doesn't hold grudges
It doesn't keep thinking over and over again
About how someone hurt you

Love doesn't think doing wrong is good

Love looks out for interests of others

Love keeps on trusting God
Even when the right choices you made
Don't turn out the way you want

Love keeps on expecting the best

Love doesn't give up
Just because something goes wrong
Or because your feelings are hurt

God is in charge
So those who love
Just keep right on loving

-Teneky Baby & Lil' Fresh

From The Beat: What a wonderful, upbeat poem! We're not sure if you're talking about the love for another person or the love for God — or both. Have the two of you always felt like this, or does this represent a new outlook on life?

My Crazy Life

Mi vida loca... I been living this life since I was first a teenager. I got jumped into a gang I been doing jails and other things just to prove to my homies that I'm down for my crazy life. I started doing drugs and drinking. Then I started to smoke weed every day with my homie Lil' Guero. Me and him were really close homies. I started to come home late and not coming home for days just because I wanted to be with my homie Lil' Guero, smoking weed and being with the jainas and all my homies. Just living my crazy life.

I been locked up five times and I haven't learned my lesson. I think that I'm never going to stop living my crazy life. But I hope that God answers my prayers so I could stop living this crazy life.

-Stranger

From The Beat: Why should God answer your prayers? Are you answering His? Do you think it's His plan that you smoke weed, drink and do the things that have gotten you locked up five times? Praying to God for help while choosing to ignore His moral plan is like lying to God. Maybe He is answering your prayers every time He sends you to jail... Maybe it's time to do more than just pray for change. Maybe it's time to do it.

Walkin' A Mile

Well, in order for somebody to live in my shoes, they gotta keep their head up and be strong about what they do. Well, I'm trying to be that one girl that I was gonna live that crazy life, trying to do what I do. But now that I did what I did, I want to become that lil' angel that I was. Sitting here wondering if I'm gonna grow up and stay out and realize what I want in my life. So all I have to say is do what you want in life to handle yours.

-Grumpy Gal

From The Beat: You have too many different messages here for us to get our minds around. If your advice to others is "do what you want in life," then how can you also want to be that "lil' angel" that you say you were? Actually, we know of no one who is all angel or all devil. Everyone we know is a combination of the two. So wishing to be one or the other won't do it. Forget being an angel, and be a human being with all your strengths and weaknesses who lives without putting her precious freedom at risk.

Apart From You

Being apart from you
Is even harder that I thought it would be
I try to be logical
And tell myself that it won't be forever
But that's not much comfort
When I really need to
Touch you and kiss you and love you
Sometimes I close my eyes
And hold a picture in my mind and imagine
All the things I'd say
If I had you here
But no matter how beautiful the picture is
It will never compare to the real thing
To looking into your eyes
And whispering your name
And kissing your lips
I miss you so much and I can't wait
For the day when I can stop
Holding on to a daydream and start holding
You in my arms again baby

-Dora

From the Beat: Well, just like you try to tell yourself, "it won't be forever," that is exactly true. You will be able to be with your boyfriend again, and say all the things you say to that imaginary picture of him. But then you'll have to decide whether you want to remain free to develop your relationship, or give it all up again by continuing to do what brings you here. If you don't make the changes you need to make to stay out of here, you'll be spending more lonely time writing sad love poems from memories that grow cold behind walls.

The Land Of Struggle

Forever I lie
My blood boils
I am a star
In a sea of deceit
A single soldier
In a concrete jungle
Never fold and crumble
Stand and rumble
Livin' in the land of struggle
RIP
Buried six feet deep
In memory of
Gets no love
Thugs
Prisoner of a ghetto war... tore

-Sir Beezy

From The Beat: We wish we knew more about the significance of these lines, Beezy. We understand the land of struggle, all right, but what are the lies you forever tell? What are you a single soldier of or for? Are you a prisoner of a ghetto war, or are you fighting other wars? (Sorry we had to change the title in your name; we don't allow "Mr." in Beat names...)

Blessed To Be Stressed

I'm Blessed To Be Stressed
I'm blessed to be stressed
Sitting in jail cell wishin'

I had a bail beezies
All playin' on my sissy pooh
Metro cell ya can't tell

I ain't even been gone
That long and now y'all
Wanna play on the phone

At least wait until Teneky Baby
Get home I'm trying to stay strong

For my momma at home
Rest in peace to my homies that's gone
And when I get out I'ma prove
Everyone wrong
Show y'all I know
Right from wrong

A word to the Lord
I can't imagine the extent of Your love for me
You sent your only Son to die for me
To give me the free gift of eternal life
I can't think of any greater sacrifice
So lift up your eyes, open ya ears
And take in what you hear
And wipe away your tears
'Cause ya too blessed to be stressed

-Teneky Baby

From The Beat: With your optimistic outlook, you should be able to put your life together in a way that will allow you to celebrate God in the freedom that was intended for you. We hope your good advice removes some stress from some of Hillcrest's writer/readers — and, beyond Hillcrest to the thousands of other people who read what you write from all over the world!

Dedicated To Manny

I met someone special in my life
The first time I laid eyes on him
I said he would be mine
I never thought we would end up being together
But look at us seven months and still strong
I hope there are more to come
I wanna be the one to make you happy
I'll be there by your side when times get stressed
I'll be there when you need someone to talk to
I'll be there to turn your frown into a smile
Because I've never met someone quite like you
Yes, what I say is true
I think I feel something deep for you
Yes, I promise to stay true
I hope one day we'll be able to say
Those three little words
I love you
I don't want you to say it if it's not true
For I've been hurt before
And I don't want to feel that
Once more

-Dora

From The Beat: We hope this proves to be the loving relationship you're looking for, but don't expect not to be hurt again, even if it is. Relationships are difficult things to manage, and often include times of pain. But then, pain is one way of reminding us that we're alive.

Clueless

I probably wouldn't invite you
To walk a mile in my shoes
'Cause you don't have any clue
What I've been through
And wouldn't know where to go or what to do
So if you're wondering how I'm pulling through
And not falling apart
It's because I got heart

-John

From The Beat: Oh, there's no doubt about that/ You wear your heart like a hat/And maybe you're right, we haven't a clue/But we know what it is we want for you/To see you free and walking straight/ Would, we think, improve your fate/Your heart's your strength, but so's your brain/So don't let this promise be in vain.

San Francisco

It's where I lay my head down at night
It's the city with bright-ass lights
Where every set has funk
And people chunkin' it, hella drunk
No matter where I go
It'll never compare to San Francisco
With purple trees
The city

-Phatt-girl

From The Beat: There is so much more to San Francisco — a city we love — than funk, chunk and drunk... There are people of every race and nationality; there is the Pacific Ocean and the Bay; there is Chinatown, North Beach, the Castro and the Mission. There are hills and thrills and spills. We don't know if you know this beautiful city in its fullness, so we hope you get to come back and just walk around and absorb the sights and sounds with clear eyes and a clear mind.

Always Mine

When I look into your eyes
It makes me feel real good inside
Mija, now you wonder why
This crazy life will never die
We can fight all night long
And you still be always mine
I wipe those lil' tears from your eyes
Please don't cry
With only you I stand beside
When I was torcido
You were the only one there for me
I thank you for your time
Damn! Your love means so much to me
And there's no other jaina in this world
Who will take you away from me
This I know is true
You my lovebird and without you I'm true
So I wrote this song
Just to let you know
What you mean to me
Me and you, you and me
Full feeling each other's fantasies
This will never die
I promise I'll stand beside you forever
I love you baby, forever mine
Every night I look into the stars
They are beautiful but you know what?
They are not as beautiful as you
Every time we kiss
We make all the birds sing
Forget the bad days
Only look into the good
Things we share can make us happy
Mija tu sabes whenever you need me
I'm here
I'm not like those other vatos who left
you all alone
I won't disappear
Tu eres mi mami, mi angel, mi amor
Y tus besos tienen buen sabor
Baby don't think I'm only trying to
waste your time
Your nombre is on my neck
'Till the end of time
Always mine

-Stranger

From The Beat: This is as strong a declaration of love as we have seen. And we believe you. But declaring your love, no matter how sincerely, is not the same as showing your love. And to us, the best way to show your love is to show that you are willing to sacrifice some things in order to be with the person you love. Whatever brought you here was, at least for the moment you did it, more important than your love because you risked being taken from her, and you lost. So we hope you make the changes you need to make in your life so you won't have to be writing beautiful but sad love poems from behind four walls again!

A Great City — San Francisco

Where the street lights shine bright
But in the ghetto there is none
There too many different sets
San Francisco
Where there is fights every day
Because of stupid things
Like sets
But I'm not the one to totally disagree
Because I'm the one that actually to the same thing
There's people getting shot every day
And I know The City is getting worse every day
People die
do crack
I am used to it
But there is some things that
Need to change

-Nie Nie

From The Beat: When we read pieces like this, we believe that your view of this wonderful city tells us more about you than about San Francisco. We live here, but we don't see fights every day, we aren't in gangs or sets, we aren't witnessing shootings, and we don't know anyone we think "need to be dead." All those things exist here, but so does Fisherman's Wharf, Golden Gate Park, Mission Dolores, the Asian Art Museum and the Museum of the African Diaspora, universities and diversities, as well as adversities... If you're going to write about a city, paint a complete picture.

Goin' Out With A Bang

I'm a young bullet
Stressed and goin' through it
I'm an addict for money makin'
Paper chasin', I thought you knew it
I look through the barrel without no race or face
One day I might erase somebody with no trace
It's nothing' fake
I ain't no blank
I'm real, a gangsta, alcoholic sippin' drank
I'm about to expire, dang
These actions I can't maintain
And I'm goin' out with a bang

-Sh

From The Beat: What's so great about going out with a bang? In fact, what's so great about "going out" at all? We were going to ask, "Would it kill you to go out with a whimper?" But then we realized that it would, indeed kill you — both ways! We'd much rather that you not go out at all, that you learn to live. Since you obviously take pride in being an alcoholic (which, to us, is the same as taking pride in not having control of your life), and addicted to money, we think your future is secure — which is to live in a secure lock up! Sorry for being so harsh, but it seems like you've written your own prescription.

when I'm ready to change, I will.

Walkin' A Mile In My Shoes

If you walk a mile in my shoes
You wouldn't believe the shhh I go through
From running from the cops
To posted up in my block
Watching people get dropped and what-not
It's like on every corner there's a nock
But to me all that is an everyday thing
'Cause that's the life in the 'hood
You know what I mean

-Lt

From the Beat: Well, we know that's the life of many in the 'hood, but we also know it's not the life of all. Some choose to avoid the situations your shoes take you to. So we hope you acknowledge how much "choice" plays in the life you lead. Your shoes don't walk without you giving them direction.

The Best Gift

My mom's birthday was Wednesday the 26th and I'm locked up! Damn, I feel hella bad 'cause I missed it. Out of all the times I messed up, I feel bad that I wasn't there for her! I'm not even gonna beat around the bush about changing 'cause when I'm ready to change, I will. Out of all the things I could give my mom, I think she'll love this year's gift. Honesty! I love you mom and thank you for riding this out with me.

-Phatt Gurl

From The Beat: We'd be willing to bet money that the gift your mother wants most from you is the one you're not ready to give — a commitment to live your life without risking being taken from her! We believe you when you say you love your mom, but words are less important than deeds. She may love the gift you've given her this year, but more than anything she'd love to have you home.

Me — A True Story

Hi, my name is James, aka Maine. I grew up in Richmond, CA. On October 31, 1989, my dad was shot and killed takin' his nieces trick or treatin'. I was 4 -1/2 months old so I don't remember nothin' 'bout him except he had a lot of money an' my grandparents got it all in a safe in the house.

My mama been in and out of jail for about 18 years. She just got out in March, '06. I hope it's her last time. Even though she hasn't been there I still love her. She been there as much as she could and gave as much as she could. She never broke her promises or our hearts. Me and my brother are 11 months apart. He's 17, and I'm 16. We got stupid love for each other. I also got another brother, Jim, and two sisters, Jazzel, 8, and Jimesha, 16, and a couple half brothers an' sisters.

Not having a dad in my life didn't affect me 'cause one, I don't know how it feels, and two, I had grandparents and greats. So they was my father figure and my great grandpa Slim couldn't have been a better father figure. He'd whoop me when I did wrong an' he'd praise me when I did right. He never made me feel unwanted and my Great Grandma been the best lady you could ever meet. She's always been there when I did wrong and through tough times and for all my court dates. She could make visits but now I don't get that. She's in the hospital. She's been in there a year and a half for a stroke, comas, and heart attacks. Her kidneys is bad. She has dialysis 3 or 4 times a week. Also she died but we put her on life support an' she came back. It's dumb-ass sad seein' her like that in the position she's in an' now I can't even see her.

I been in here for eight months for a robbery. Haven't seen or talked to her. I wanna see her hella bad. I don't want her to die while I'm in this hole, but the looks of it, I gotta lot mo' time. But I'm still goin' to court, so it could change. But the people who do visit me is my grandparents and great grandpa.

Anyways, me and my 17- year-old brother didn't like the situation we was in. We went to our grandparents' house from our great grandparents wit' nothin' — no checks or money comin' in. We was just livin' off the pocket money of our grandparents. It was nine people livin' in a 2-1/2 bedroom house. Girls upstairs, boys downstairs in a room as big as 2-1/2 cells wit' two bunk beds. That took up all the space we had, so all we did was sleep in there. It was too small to do anything else.

After a while, me an' my brother couldn't take it no more so our uncle found an apartment in Vallejo. So we stayed out there with him wit' me an' my brothers. Extra heads was makin' bills go up. But our uncle wasn't even trippin'. But the least we could do was help pay an' wasn't 'bout to get no job. The only money we had comin' through was \$50 each. That only \$100 so we started savin' every month for two months. Now we got \$200 an' we started hustlin' from Vallejo to Richmond. Two months later we was eatin'. We was doin' good. (To be continued...)

-Maine

From The Beat: This is a great piece of writing, Maine. We really feel we have been given a thorough picture of your life. But still, it leaves us with some questions. First, do you know any of the details of your father's murder? Was it random? Did he have enemies? What happened? Second, since you're named James, how do you have a brother named Jim? Is your great grandmother conscious, or is she still in a coma? It's really hard being away from those you love, especially when they are sick, and we're sorry you have to go through this. Also, (and we hope this will be answered when you continue), we want to know why you would risk everything you had for an illegal hustle that brought you to this lock-up when you didn't need to do it. If your uncle wasn't tripping about the expenses, why did you need to risk your freedom this way? Finally, we want to give you props for understanding that your mother did the best she could, even if her best wasn't really good enough. Your love for her shows that you have a good heart. Now you need to bring your head in line with your heart.

Summer With Dad

The best summer I ever had was last year when I stayed at my dad's house. The funnest thing about it was that me and him are big smokers so we really smoked all day every day. That's one of the reason why me and my dad are close because we understand each other.

-Lil' Beezy

From The Beat: It's sad when a young man needs to smoke in order to relate to his father, or when a father needs to smoke in order to relate to his son. There is more to your relationship with your father than smoking, if one of you has the courage to open the right doors.

Everybody Ain't On My Level

Not too many people could walk a mile in my shoes! For one thing, everybody ain't on the same level as me and most haven't experienced as many things as I've experienced. Most haven't been to as many places as I've been, even though the places I've been aren't that far from where I'm from or where I stomp.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Just having a lot of different experiences and going a lot of different places, means a lot in life — but learning from our experiences and where we've been, is the key!

Hating Emotions

I hate my emotions and choices that are made in life, because sometimes choices take people that I love out my life for a moment. I just hope that the master plan works out, because I want to reunite quickly and go back to being a go-getter.

So let's put this plan in action. Yada-I-mean! See ya' soon. This better work!

-Chocolate Baby

From The Beat: Chocolate Baby, learn to deal with your emotions and make better choices... that's it! That's all you got to do. Be good. Make a plan that will work out best for you in the long run. Stop chasing instant gratification. Yada-we-mean?

2005 Was The Best Summer

For me, my best summer was the summer of '05. I have to say '05, 'cause both the summers of '03 and '04, I was in jail. I was in CYA doin' some hard time and missin' time in my life that I can never get back.

When I got out of YA on the fifth of June, it all began. When I first got out, I went and bought a nice whip. Then I started light-weight messing up, by not going to my meetings or seein' my PO. Yeah, but I was shining! I was catching hella females and getting dough. I stayed blowin' hella grapes and kept a bottle. I just wasn't listenin' that summer. I was havin' it my way, period!

-Loe

From The Beat: And here you are back in max, 'cause refusing to listen to the voices of wisdom, steady keep landing you back in the system. Haven't you worn out this tired routine yet? Sure, have some fun, but remember how much fun you miss (locked up!) when you insist on living your life like this!

Amusement Parks

The best summer I've ever had, was last summer, when my friends and I went to Great America and to Water World and to Marine World. We met a lot of new girls, pretty girls at that!

-Juan

From The Beat: Sounds like fun in the sun, for sure! Did any relationships with those new girls endure? Still friends?

Summertime

The best summer I ever had was last year because I went to Great America almost every weekend. I always went with my friends from when it open to when it closed. We went on all the rides and we always got free food. The funnest time we ever had was when we found \$80.00 and an iPod. We ate so good that day.

-Giovani

From The Beat: What luck finding those lost items! But did you just run and spend it right away? Did you and your friends think about, or discuss, the possibility of turning it in to the lost and found? We understand the temptation it was, and why you chose to just take it. But did you think about not taking it? Tell us what went through your head.

Family Times

Last summer I had a lot of fun. I went to Great America with my family and we had a lot of fun. I wish I could start over and do it all over, start my life over so I could live it a better life with my family.

-Kid

From The Beat: Guess what, you can start a better life! You can't start from the beginning and ignore the past, but it's not too late for a fresh start if you have the courage to make that choice.

Missing Plenty

What I miss from home is my car, sleeping in my own bed, being with my family and my girl. The other thing I miss about home is being able to move around without asking for permission. I also miss Chico and Brown. They are my two dogs. I be cruising with them in my car. That's all I miss from home.

-Lil' Joker

From The Beat: Everything is at home waiting for you. It is all on you to not blow it again. What must you sacrifice/change to keep your freedom?

My Dream Car

My dream car is a Buick Century on 22 inch rims with four-fifteen inch speakers with candy paint apple green, with a TV in all the windows and two tweeters in the grill with my girl in the back seat and that is it Beat.

-Lil' Street

From The Beat: We hope all your dreams come true, and we hope you drive safe too.

Best Friends Till The End

She might as well be my blood
Due to the fact we grew up in the same hood

We got each others back
Through thick and thin
We made mistakes
But through this hard life...

Our motive is to win!

To be continued

-Ashley and Britona

From The Beat: Great motive. What does winning mean to you? In the end, what will you have won?

A Day In My Shoes

Saludos, Beat! I want to start this piece with my sending my utmost love and respect laced to all. With that stated, down to bizz. Q-vo, Beat! What's good with y'all? As for this vato, I'm staying solid, holding it down, just enjoying the company of mi gente and letting time fly — just doing what we do best.

A day in my shoes? Most of these ninjas couldn't live the life I live. The things I've seen and the things I've been through, I'm living life to the fullest, with no regrets. I was raised by these streets and I'm a die by them. If they were in the position I'm in, they would've broken under all this pressure! Not me, I'd rather do life in the pen'. Well, that's it for now. Till next time. Alratos.

-Slick

From The Beat: You know we have a policy against printing suicide notes in our pages, and you're claim that you plan to die by the streets sounds like just another form of suicide. We believe that your life hasn't been easy — and isn't easy now! Courage is a virtue, but it's the life you say you love that put you here. Some things are worth regretting. Live and learn. Stay strong young man, you have a long bump road ahead, regardless of how you view yourself.

The Best Summer, We Had Fun!

The best summer I ever had, was the summer when I was with my mom and she took us to the carnival — and we had fun! And I was with my family that summer, and we went to the Manteca Water Slides — and that was the best time! Man, we had fun! So that was it. I had a summer job that summer, too, and it was okay. That is it.

-Demetrus

From The Beat: It sounds like a great summer, together with your family, and your mom taking you all to the carnival and the water slides! And you were doing good, too, with a job and all. Don't give up on yourself. Do your part and there will be more good times ahead. Imagine one day you're grown up with a job and raising your family — and you take your kids to Manteca!

Walkin' A Mile In My Air Forces

Walkin' is how I use to make money, until I got an Impala on twenty-two inch rims and started networking and really getting dough.

Ninjas can't walk in my Air Forces. They ain't did what I did! I used to run with my crew until my ninjas start running like suckas and I decided to stick with a ninja I really knew and could trust, too. Yeah, we were two ninjas that love being fly and flashy.

I ain't gon' say that I'm was getting more money then you, but I'm saying that you gone' stay in the same spot by yourself. My ninja got popped! Yeah. Mull got popped, and that the only ninja I was with. You know what he got killed for? Man, I don't know! But I know one thing, ninja damn sho' can't walk a mile off in my Air Forces — you ain't did what I did! RIP Mall.

-Young Quez

From The Beat: Why are you bragging about living a life that got your best friend killed? No matter which way you work it, getting your money off the spot, stops cold — you die young or get grow old doing time. It's time for you to point your shoes in a different direction, 'cause Mall (RIP) is dead and it's time for repenting.

Syrup And Grapes, The Best Summer

The best summer I ever had started off June 14, 2004 just before my friend Davon Livingston died. On the last day of school we went around scrapin' people and takin' their money. After all that happened, we went and got some syrup and grapes, but that's the last memory I have of my friend.

-C-Baby

From The Beat: How did your friend die? Was it an accident, or was it a result of using your free summertime scrapin' people? Tell us the story behind your story.

Last Summer

The best summer I ever had was last summer. I did a lot of things last summer. Me and a couple of my friends went to Great America. It went dumb. It was me, my brother, and my friend Keith. I also had a car, I had a Century.

-Driver

From The Beat: Summer is all about good times with friends — we hope you are on the outs this summer so you can appreciate it all the more.

Me And You, Girl

so much catastrophe
when your living in tragedy
plus I'm hella pissed 'cause my
girlfriend's mad at me
i know she gets wild
but i can't get mad because i knew
her since i was a child
kicking it with her daily and soon
she became my baby
i love her so much
even when things get rough
the day i met you
i knew god sent you
to be with me forever
even through worst weather
i always knew that we were meant to
be together
walkin' with you to school
man i thought i was cool
i love the way you kiss my neck
even when it's wet
i knew it took time for me and you
to set
your sexy brown eyes
and those thick thighs
and glad you love me and not those
other guys
jesus sent you to me
so i knew it was meant to be
me and you forever
so i don't think twice
'cause i love you like my wife
and i'm glad that you're part of my
life

-Lil' Krazy

From The Beat: The way you can throw a twist into a rhyme, makes you one of our favorite poets doing time — but it's the life that led you to live in a cell that separated you from the one you love so well. And now you have to hope and pray, her love for you is strong enough to wait till you walk free. Revenge always seems to make sense, till you see you're locked behind a barbed-wire fence, just hoping for a letter from home — and the vengeance cycle just goes on and on. You've got to break free from that old mentality, and teach others how to stay free from needless fatalities and overpopulated jails and penitentiaries.

Life

when i was young
i use to kick back and watch the o g's
talk and drink o e's
looking from a crack in the fence
paranoid as hell 'cause i knew i was in the trance
i didn't know what to do but just sit there and see them
smoke, drink and talk mess to people
now that i'm old and it's like the sequel
i do the same thing
and make my money just to bling
posted on the block until early in the morning
busting knocks 'cause it just won't stop
stayed with a pistol on my hip and ran from cops
didn't know how to make money the right way
so i just stood out all day
kicking it wit' the homies
bustin' at ninjas that acted phony
man when will this ever stop
i was heated when my homie got popped
but what was i supposed to do
just sit and look at these foo's
no because i went home grabbed the rawlo
and called my homie wit' the semi-auto
but i gotta be a leader and not follow
so think before you drink that drink and swallow

-H-Fella

From The Beat: It's not about these foo's or those, but only looks that way when you're caught up in that show — really everyone who packs a gun and busts, shares responsibility for your homie hitting the dust. We don't mean you should take his death lightly, but adding to the violence is just acting blindly — 'cause it's time you open your eyes and see that these street rivalries and gang wars that you and your homies are killing and dying for, are the root cause for your loss. Don't ask when it will stop; ask if it was worth your homies dying for or not — and you stop, let the gun drop and never, ever pick it up!

RIP Marcus

What's good, Beat? Me up here at Camp, doing my program. I just found out my cousin got killed! Man, shhh getting shady 'round here!

But it' coo! Ninja's gon' get touched, regardless. Man, I get out in a few months, feel me? Touchdown and eat like I usually do. Yeah, though, RIP Lil' Marc, fo' life! We always gon' hold you down! Yeah, to all locked up, stay up.

-Lil' Guesada

From The Beat: Are you for real? You call him a "mob-star for life" (which we cut) when he just got killed? Man, you might as well have pulled the trigger that killed him! And now you want to lead others deeper into that meat-grinder called the street game? You need a check up from the neck up!

You Wouldn't Want To Walk In My Shoes

if you walk in my shoes right now
you wouldn't want to walk in them
because it's guns and drugs everywhere
you walk on the turf where i be
and i think you will be scared out your life

-Young Slick

From The Beat: Maybe so, but look where your "fearlessness" got you — in maximum security. Your feet need to walk free from the system, it's true, and from your guns-and-drugs mentality, too! Expand your vision of how it has to be: Get a job when you get out, and stay free!

Walk A Mile In My Shoes

I can't really say anybody can walk a mile in my shoes, 'cause I never walk. I'm constantly speeding down the fast lane looking at everybody in the rear view. Plus I never stop, because if you stop, that's when you get got, either by enemies or police.

You gotta watch out for the rivals the most. But if you're smart, you keep your friends close and your enemies closer — so basically your eyes are always on them and you always know what they are gonna do before they do it. 'Cause it's a "gotta get mines" kinda world, and you never know whose gonna try and catch you slipping. Nowadays people walk up to your front door where your mama lives and run in with guns, all because you're making a little more than them. It's getting more dangerous, and people are getting bolder everyday. It used to be you disrespect a guy he jumps you and its over. Now people gotta shoot somebody to feel powerful.

But some days you could go around and not run into somebody who wants to start funk. Those are the days that you wake up, take a shower, call up your girl, take her to her house, and do the "bed room boom", smoke a blunt, and make hella money with no problems. That means when you sell a sack, the buyer doesn't waste your time trying to make you front them — he "comes correct" with the whole amount of twenty or forty or whatever. The police don't start sweating you, and you don't have to pull the heater on someone coming at you sideways.

-Mc-cuh-dah -tome

From the Beat: Those so-called good days, when you sell your poison in the community without catching funk or heat, are not worth the price you'll pay on the day you get taken off your feet by rivals or the police. You feel? We agree that it's getting more dangerous daily. And you sound intelligent enough to find another way to make your payday. So what is it? What has you addicted to the street and all of its inevitable grief? Even if it's all you've ever known, you can already see the writing on your dome — get out the game while you're still standing, Mc-cuh-dah-tome.

Good, Bad and Ugly In My Shoes

If you was to walk in my shoes, it would be a good experience; or, well, maybe sort of a bad experience, too.

The reason why I say a bad experience, is because of all the bad stuff that has happened in my life. I mean from the deaths to the cells. I mean, on my mama though, I went through hella stuff through my life. I mean, by being on fools, sleeping fools, and gettin' stabbed and some mo' such. But it's all good though. I'm still standing, still banging to the day I rest, on mamas.

But the good experience I had, is that I stay in school and stay pulling girls. Ya know? Stay gettin' rich, stay gettin' a piece of this money while it's available. You know, staying on top of my game. It's good doing my dirt. But it's good though — still go' be banging forever.

-Derrick

From The Beat: Staying in school didn't get you locked up or stabbed, but banging and all that goes with it did! Sure there are fun times kicking it with your homies, and you're writing about the money you make, selling drugs, we presume, and maybe hitting licks, etc. But you just might end up both getting locked up and stabbed behind that bullspit! It's time to turn both your Cortez in another direction — both feet in school and find out how much legitimate money you can pull with a j-o-b and stay free permanently.

Girl, Get Another Hustle (No Disrespect)

Girls that sell their body should have more respect for themselves. I don't know why you do it, but your heart is beyond the worth of money. We love you enough to tell you this - so don't take it personal.

-Ash and Tori

From The Beat: Good advice. If you respect yourself, others will too.

In Love

I fell in love with this girl and I barely knew her. Was it fate, was it destiny? I have no idea. All I now is that I haven't been in love for a long time, it's like a brand new feeling. She's beautiful and she's down for mine, but she's really straight up real. I hope we stay together for as long as we can.

I'll be gone for a while but I hope she knows, I'll always be real with her and I'll be back someday, hopefully she'll still be there.

I don't know what else to say but that I love her.

-Smokey Lo

From The Beat: Smokey, perhaps this is just a case of infatuation. To truly love someone takes a commitment, to be down for her as well. You aren't really in a good situation to start a relationship with anyone right now. Get your life back together and when you get back, you'll be able to concentrate on building a life with someone.

Will The Be A Tenth Time

I came back to jail for the 9th time. Yeah I ran from my group home, but screw it what do I care? This time something weird, but good happened. I fell in love with this ride or die, cute, down ass girl and I'm glad it happened. I love her and that won't change. I won't see her for a few months, but after that I'm going to call her and see if she's home. I think she went home on EM release.

Hopefully she will still be there waiting for me. I know she will 'cause she always stays true. I can't wait to see that smile, those eyes, I love everything about her.

-Smokey Lo

From The Beat: Smokey Lo, you've been to jail nine times! That's a big deal. You need to care about running from your group home, you're ruining your life. Get your life together before you ruin hers too!

Walkin' A Mile In My Shoes

if you took a walk in my shoes
you wouldn't like it
if you like posting on the block all day
selling crack- cocaine just to eat and keep clothes on your back
go ahead and step into my shoes then
if you want to see your black people coked out
and know you're the one killing them by serving them drugs
then ha! — take a walk in my shoes
if you want to be around other drug dealers with guns
and having to watch your back twenty-four/seven
off hating-ass ninjas that try to stop yo' money
then ha! — take a walk in my shoes
if you want to hear gun shots coming at you or around you
then ha! — take a walk in my shoes
if you're young and know how to be serious
about your money and what you do
then ha! — take a walk in my shoes
if you want to smell hennsey and purple
then ha! — take a walk in my shoes
if you ever take a walk in my shoes
then you have to keep it lit
meaning you have to be fast on your feet
and know what you're doing and where you're going
and watch out for them decoys
which are undercover cops trying to act as knocks
but go ahead — take a walk in my shoes

-Young D

From The Beat: We see clearly why we would not want to take a walk in your shoes, but the question is — why don't you get yourself another pair of shoes. You know, change the way you walk through life, what you do, where you go, how you make your dough? There are ways to be serious about money without putting your life and freedom at risk. They call it a game 'cause there's always a chance you'll lose, and sooner or later, you always do.

Walkin' A Mile In My Shoes

What's good, Beat? How y'all been? I hope and pray y'all been doing good. This Lil' Chuckie, doing my time in this Camp. I just got here like two weeks ago, like my homie Juanito and Shorty said "Ay, homie, you're gonna have to wait like a month to go to Camp." And that was right. I just wish they were here with me, but a homie's life don't stop but keeps on going — so stay strong and keep your head up high.

But about this topic, walkin' a mile on my K-Swiss, all white. I'm not gonna act hella hard like some of these vatos, but life is a struggle and you gotta keep on doing what you're doing! That's all I got to say.

-Lil' Chuckie

From The Beat: If you were to wish Juanito to go on doing what he was doing before he got locked up, you'd be wishing him right back to getting locked up facing serious charges all over again. We're not talking about his case, but you and he and Shorty need to think through what the life style you're choosing is doing to you and anyone who cares about you. When Juanito was in Camp, he didn't want to change, and next thing you know, he's writing to The Beat from max. Those are the facts.

Untitled

What it do? Me, nothing just waiting to go to this group home, I am suppose to be leaving May 8th but I doubt it because on April 24th was when they told me this and now it's been almost 2 weeks and I still don't know who my P.O. is or if I even have one or if any group homes got my paperwork yet!

I ain't trippin' though 'cause I talked to my dude the other day and he asked me to be his wife, like he really proposed so I am officially engaged and I couldn't be happier! And he ain't no lil bop or minor, my ninja is grown, 21 this June 9th, but it ain't nothing 'cause we been together two years strong and his name is tatted on my back. I know you probably think I'm crazy for getting his name on me but it ain't crazy if you got a solid ninja and a solid relationship! I just want to say love you Juicy!

And to all doing time keep your head up and stay strong! Do the time don't let it do you!

-Juicy's Girl

From The Beat: Congratulations on your engagement—we hope you're both happy and it all goes well. Good luck with getting your group home situated and remember the marriage can wait. First things first, and that's taking care of you!

Take a Walk In My Shoes

If you was to walk in my shoes, you would start off like this: First, you would get some food, because my moms cooks for me in the morning. So, then I will go get in the shower; then go crease my pants; and then go get my twin brother from his room; and then we will go out to my van.

And then I will call my other brother and tell him to get my other brother to go to the block; then we will go and meet them over there. So, after that, me and my twin brother will go to our girl's house in San Leandro. So I will then take my twin brother back home to get his car, because we like to ride back to back! Girls be on us; sometimes them girls make us feel famous, the way they be actin'.

And then we will smoke hella weed and get some drank, but the girls I mess with don't do that; I don't want to support a girl or no one's habit, ya feel me? Then I will leave there, after me and my girl have some fun, ya feel? But that's one of the simple days. That's it and that's all (and if I told you one of my Hall stories, they would not put it in The Beat).

-Stoneface

From The Beat: Is this a weekend or a school day? We hope it's the former, 'cause you may be enjoying yourself but basically it's just killing time, which is fine for a weekend (or an occasional weekend). However, you need to get something going for the sake of your life's future on those weekdays, whether it's getting through school to earn your degree or starting to work a job, just to get yourself into the world of legitimate employability. Don't let those fantasy feelings of "fame" you get from those girls, have you stuck in a dream — or you'll keep waking up in places you don't want to be (like here, for example).

Ask One Wish

just lust graduated
love has made it
them tears should have failed
kissin' you wit'
passionate
sadistic
wit' whoever she is
your love will be my presentee
i'm selfish
want whoever she is since
my loud tears became silenced
but forever i'll ask one wish

-Lil' Mainy the Prince

From The Beat: Love and lust are just kissing cousins, but one stays true while the other doesn't. So don't confuse one with the other, or you're bound to suffer at the loss of yet another lover.

What I Miss Most About Home

What I miss the most about home, is first of all — my familia! And my lil' homie, Smokey; that's the name of my pit bull! I miss eating at home and smoking weed (purple). Then, after that, comes the females; I miss all my ladies. You feel?

-Slick

From The Beat: So what led you to giving all that up? What started you down the path that got you locked up? Is it something you did or something you didn't do? And what will you do different next time freedom comes to you?

Missing Home

What's up wit' it, Beat and Beat readers? This Lil' B from Hayward, just dropping a couple lines, ya feel? But now to the topic at hand: You ask what do I miss about home.

Well, I miss everything about home, especially when my mom yells at me for coming home high and when I steal flasho's (cigarettes) from her. But what I miss most about being home, has got to be the food. And wearin' my own clothes. Oh, yeah, I almost forgot, smashin' on fools! Ya feel? 'Cause it's that "G" in me.

-Lil' B

From The Beat: Time to grow up and be a man, which means outgrow your gang. Yeah, there are grown men who bang their whole lives, but if you want to know how mature they get — ask their children, or their wives better yet. Time to grow up and be a man, Lil' B. Then incarceration will just be your past history.

That Special Place

You could be my Bonnie
I could be your Clyde
We could ride together
Side by side
And if things were to go wrong
I know you'd always be there
'Cause I would show you so much love and care
So I'll never leave your side
I'm always down to ride
All I want is for you to be happy
With a smile on your face
Then me and you could go to that special place.

-Kevin

From The Beat: Just 'cause your words rhyme, doesn't mean that this is a great idea. Bonnie and Clyde, died in a shootout. Although that scenario has been romanticized, that life isn't 'all good'. If the special place you are talking about is happiness, then re-evaluate your life of strife, and find a girl, take her for a whirl, and live happily ever after.

Side Show Summer

The best summer I ever had was when side shows first came out. Wit' my ninjas, slapping and riding all through the town, body on one, lungs full of haze, eyes bloodshot red! Let the doors swing open and show 'em really how to hang. I'm showing from the sun roof, both hands on a bottle, mouth wide open! Now everybody' knowing.

-Mien G-Money

From The Beat: When you first showed up at Camp, we thought you might be one who could begin to understand that some changes need to be made in your life so you could stay free — but all you write about now is haters, guns, how bad you are and stupid fun.

Missing So Many Things

Man, I miss so many things at home! First of all, I miss my brothers! And my mom and dad! My bed, I miss my phone and radio so much!

And I'm so tired of this food in here — so that's another thing I miss about home, the food! Plus, in here I can't watch TV when I want to; I can't change the radio cd's when I want to. I am so tired of being in here! I'm in here for something I did when I was sixteen — I'm 18 now! And I have ninety days in here; so I still have to wait a minute before I can continue my freedom pass. So, I'm out till next time.

-Kionte

From The Beat: So what keeps bringing you back here, if the original crime that got you caught up in the system happened two years ago? Are you missing school? We're not saying it's fair or right, but what brought you here this time? If you're eighteen now, how is it your back in the juvenile system at all?

I Try Not To

nowadays what ninjas want they take
so that's why i keep a powerful enough thing in the
waist
any ninja can move fast at times but i keep the pace
i laugh at sucka ninjas jus' think what a disgrace
but usually positive is in my mind
but when on my grind
ninjas be scoozing, plotting on how they can get me
from behind
i see most of these ninjas as cowardly hearted
so if they come at me, fasho' they my target
and what i do, i do it good
i have a female doing stuff she thought she never would
i keep it gangsta, no romance
girl, i don't dance
i just want to have fun
to me negative is a false
but i'm writin' all this wearin' county draw's

-Baby Ant

From The Beat: You're bragging about turning a girl out. Just imagine that's your own sister your talking about, and think about how it sounds and how you would feel — 'cause up close and personal like that is what keeps it real. You talk about others being cowardly, but using a young woman like that is lower than a man should be, ever; it's not even a man, just a pimp mask covering up the manhood that never came to pass. How are you going to call that life style positive? You need to get a little more cognitive about the life you're living. If the grind makes you lose your mind and do what you know is wrong, then be strong and find another way to make your pay. You'll both stay free and keep your conscience clean. Yaddamean?

My Shoes

if you can't stand the world or the rules
then you would neva be able to walk in my shoes
if you was in my shoes you couldn't stand it
i try to handle things
you'd probably run and jump off the planet
i cant stand it
when people act like they have it
then they slanted
in the planet
wit' they' face in the granite
so they change it
before they' heads get flattened
try to walk in my shoes and probably burn up like acid,
steady stackin'
they yappin'
so instead of snappin'
i'm rappin'
'fore somethin' real bad happens
you try and end up like wrappin'
not music
either a body bag or a casket
man i'm still tryin' to see the light
if you was in my shoes
you'd probably be runnin' fo' your life
so think before you try to get your stripes
'cause your heart
ain't nearly big enough to fit my nikes

-Buddamilk

From The Beat: You talk like the life you're living is working for you, and here you are being given one last chance at Camp — and still talking like a fool! If a youngster refuses to chase stripes in the street, it's not 'cause he's got less heart but 'cause he's more smart than those who keep confusing hustling with losing. If you're in it to win it, change your game will you still can.

Keep It Real At Camp

What up, Beat? Just saying what's up! I am up here at Camp, and it's okay for now. I am now going home on over-night'ers!

Yet, to me, this noise going on up here is really fake, these people always talking about what they do on the outs — but you know this talk is not for real. Just kids actin' real fake! That's the way i think of it. Man, keep it real, that's all you need to do.

-D

From The Beat: Yeah, all that stupid talk at Camp is not only fake, it encourages others to think and act the wrong way. For all the positives at Camp, the most negative thing isn't even write-ups and all that — but the mouths of these fools glorifying what they say the used to do. Don't listen, and you'll do cool.

It Gets Better

order another round
full moon out
eclipse cover the town
some say i'm rude
respect chedda
a loud — "one life to live"
young and restless around
doing seven months
without making a sound
most say i'm cocky
i just let the front block me
two thousand yards rushing
you can't stop me
all yards from scrimmage
they know i'm in it to win it
it gets betta
no pretendin'
then end it

-Lyfe

From The Beat: It gets better if you learn from your mistakes, use Camp time to come legit straight out the gate. Football is cool, but your street crew won't serve your time with you unless they get caught, too — and even then a few will roll over on you.

R-I-P Woody

The saddest thing i own is this necklace i have of me and my older brother on it, that my brother got for me on my birthday. That was the last thing my brother got me. Every time i look at it, i get mad, because he ain't here no more! So every year on the day before my birthday, i wear it — he died the day before my birthday. But i'll never forget you, big brah! You will always be loved. RIP WOODY.

-Baby Boi

From The Beat: What's left but the love, the memories and the necklace? Well, you are. And your brother's spirit is watching over you. If he could talk, he'd say, "Stop taking chances with your life, bra! It's time to start living right, 'cause you're living for both of us now." RIP Woody.

Worn-Out Shoes

you wouldn't want
to a walk a mile in my shoes
because i've been worn out
no one likes to wear
worn-out shoes

-Ross

From The Beat: We hope this is just a joke, 'cause we don't think you've been worn-out — even if your heart has been torn out, it just means it's time to turn your shoes in a different direction. When it comes to your spirit, it's never too late for resurrection!

Drew's Best Summer

The summer of '03 was Drew's best summer! That summer i went to L.A with my big brothers in some candy-painted scrapers on buttons (rims, 22's). That's when i was young dumb and full of come.

Me my brothers and a couple of friends went out that way, ready to enjoy the nice hot weather and the beautiful women walkin' around barely wearin' nothing! But what impressed me the most was the beautiful sites, especially at night. But yeah, i met some good lookin' ladies! Yet, out of all of them, only one made me want to slow down and get serious. Ms. J. (Ashley J!) She's very strong-minded and could take care of herself. She has a good personality and a good job — two of them! She has a beautiful face and body, just the whole nine, nah, the whole hundred yards! She still supports me to his day.

But yeah, we went out there to party late-night every night. Stuntin' on them L.A. cats, with them doors wide open! Showin' em how "the town" (Oakland) get down. We got into about twelve fights and had three parties shut down — it was all good, other than that. But it was rated "R", so i can't share it all in The Beat!

-Drew

From The Beat: It sounds like a wild time, with emotions running high, and everyone feeling fly, riding into the myriad lights of an L.A. night. But yeah, we have to agree that you were young and dumb, and we're glad you walked away from some of those fights and parties. Still, that was part of the life that led you to where you are. We hate to say it, 'cause fun is fun! But what you'll need to do when you get through with this time you've bound to do at the Y, is learn how to have fun and still stay wise, learn how to stay fly without throwing up sets and getting into fights. Fun is a must, but not the kind you find lining the road to doing serious time.

Camp

What's up, Beat? This Lil' Chuckie, doing my time here in Camp. Well, i want to let you know how i'm doing up here in Camp. It's my second week, i got two more to go. By the time y'all read this, i'll be with my familia and my baby mama!

i just can't wait to get my first HV, but i just gotta wait. About this Camp: This is the easiest program to do your time! But the only thing is that in here some ninjas be tryin' to act hella hard, but they never do nothing about it. That's what i've noticed from the time i've been in here. But other than that, it's way better then bein' in that box all day. i'm good with that! i'll stay here and pimp this Camp out of my way, and continue my life.

-Lil' Chuckie

From The Beat: Yeah, there's a lot of meaningless talk at Camp. The key is to ignore it and not contribute to the atmosphere it creates. Also, it's good that you plan to complete your program, 'cause it is as easy as you make it — but don't just continue your life the way it was going or it's going to bring you back to lock up.

Potna Ran From Camp

Man, what's up? Man, yeah, i'm back. But my potna just cut from Camp! So i'm feelin' bad right now, but i know he's on the outs eatin' — so it's good. So i ain't trippin'. But, uh, i'm going on home passes now — so i guess it's good! Y'all gon' be hearin' from me more.

-Mondi Moe

From The Beat: You're right to feel bad for your friend, 'cause he may fly high for a minute — but by the time you walk away free, he'll be caught up back in it, locked up in the Hall ... praying he gets another chance at Camp and home passes and all that.

My Life

Man most of my life, is having hella fun. But the other half is trying to survive. Trying to stay with my G's in my pocket and nice clothes on my back, food on the table. You know, trying to survive, 'cause it's hard on these streets and you always tired. You get no sleep, 'cause if you sleep you might miss some money. You always got people hating on you 'cause you about yo' money.

That's why i stay with my thing 'cause you never know who hate the fact that you got plenty of paper stack so they envy the way you move in the Bentley. To be continued.

-Lil' Turk

From The Beat: Lil' Turk, we think you are a little bit confused about why people hate on you. Look at how you make your money? Look at the kind of people that you are surrounded by. Picture a life where you don't have to fight or carry a gun. Is it possible with the kind of lifestyle that you are living now? If you want a better life, you have to change yourself and whom you hang around. You're not going to be able to change others.

Try Walkin' A Mile In My Heels!

When I wake up in the morning it's always a hard decision whether to wear sneakers or heels. Most of the time I wear sneakers, because heels hurt my feet.

After I take my one hour and a half to get ready, I call my best friend who lives down the street to come pick me up.

When I get in the car she's always hearing my E-40 CD, "I'm Just Happy To Be Here."

We also always get those car air fresheners, so there's that sweet candy smell in the car.

The first place we go is Starbucks to get a coffee and smoke a cigarette. After that it depends on the day.

There's at least a couple of days a week I'll go to my friend's house in Berkeley. There's always kids running around in front, and the smell of weed hits your nostrils. I'll hang out for a couple of hours depending on who's there. Usually there's a bunch of people and the music is always bumpin'!

After that I go to school then work.

-Annah

From The Beat: You sure do plenty before you hit the school house! What time does school start? We'll assume you don't hit he weed, given you never mention that you do, although it is around. So what is it gonna take to get up and out of the system for good? What's the plan?

The Best Summer Was Last August

The best summer I ever had was last August because it was my birthday. I turned sixteen, it was my "Sweet 16" and it was a surprise!

At first it was boring and lame and I wanted to run away from my group home, "Children Of The Night."

My birthday was boring until a limo drove up in the front of my group home, it was a white man that looked boring but it was actually Anthony and his wife from "Without A Trace." Him and his wife came for my birthday and brought me an ice cream Reese's cake!

That was the best summer I ever had it was so great I felt so famous that day it was great! I had flowers, cake, a famous couple, and fun. It was a great summer, the best I ever had!!!

-Cherry

From The Beat: Too cool. We know you will never forget that birthday. What's in store for seventeen?

Tired Of Being Here!!

I am tired of being here I am so mad. I gotta go to Thunder Road because I told my PO I smoke weed so she said I was addicted so I'll probably do a few months in the program.

I want to go home, I miss my boyfriend Louis. I saw him when I went to court. I miss my grandma.

I only been here two weeks which feels like two years because the days go by very slow. I can't wait to be free, wear my own clothes and do what I want to do. Without some staff telling me what to do and how to do it.

-Jasmine

From The Beat: We know how hard it must be to lose the freedom you so used to, but maybe a change of scenery will be good—if you can focus on being positive you might be able to benefit from your time, so that you won't be writing us again after your three months at Thunder Road is up.

Back With Experience

Well this is my forth time in here, but first writing to The Beat. Every time I came in here I didn't think there would be a next time.

I've met girls in here who can call this home but "How?" how could you call this home? I can't say this is my last time in here but I can do my best to stay out of here.

So to everybody doing serious time I feel for you. I have no regrets only experiences that I learned from.

-Martina

From The Beat: What must you address so there isn't a next time you find yourself locked up? As for no regrets, please, you have your freedom taken from you and you have no regrets??? Think about what's happening here.

The Saddest Thing I Own

The saddest thing I owned was a picture of my grandpa Burley holding me when I was first born in the hospital, but before he died he left my grandma a carwash named after him, "Burley's Auto Detail".

-Jasmine

From The Beat: Like so many sad things, it sounds like the photo, and memory, of your grandpa is also a little bit happy. Sentimental things are often that way.

Houston Texas What Was The Best Summer

It was a few years ago I got on the plane and went to Houston, Texas by myself. I went to see my great grandma. I had a lot of fun, it was very hot, and big flying roaches fly around. I went to an Amusement Park called Splash. I met the other side of my family and that meant a lot to me.

-Jasmine

From The Beat: Meeting extended family is so special. We're glad you got to do that. Better summers are down the road, that is if you choose to lead a better lifestyle.

Do Good For My Grandmother, RIP

The thing I wish I could tell my grandmother, is that I love her and I want to be with her — but I can't 'cause she's in heaven and I'm down here messin' up. And I know she wanted me to do good. So here's what I'll do for her — I'll do my best that I could. And I want to say, I love you, Momma. And I miss you, Chocolate — holla at me in The Beat!

-Al Boo-Boo

From The Beat: We feel your grandmother's spirit smiling up in heaven and dropping a tear of joy for her grandson and favorite boy! Just do what you say, and it will all be okay.

You Can't Fit In Droops' Shoes

What's up, Beat. It's Droops, coming out of the 150 Hall. Well, to the topic: If you were to walk in Droops' shoes, you would kick it with the homeboys from the hood. On the block, post up and grind, pulling females from the 'hood all day long!

But it ain't always good in my 'hood. There's funk that me and the homies get into with other gang bangers, but they don't want to come to our block! You would not want to be in my shoes though, 'cause you can't fit — so don't do it if you can't.

-Droops

From The Beat: If you're so good at walking that gangster walk, what are you doing on lock up? Now you may this that ain't nothin'! And you'd be right insofar as it's nothing compared to what lies ahead if you keep living this same gang banging life now that you're becoming a man. It's time to make an alternative plan, while you still can.

Time's Up!

What's up The Beat this Jazzy Phay, ready to go home missing them Oakland Streets. I can't wait to go home! These seven days I got left going by so slow. When I get out I got to make better decisions to stay out, and choose my friends wisely.

-Jasmine

From The Beat: That's a great plan and we wish you the best of luck on probation. Follow through!

Home

Security, safety
Love, lies, truths,
Converse, mtv, bet,
Don't do drugs

-Ck Baby

From The Beat: Hmmm...These are all powerful words/images. What inspired these words? We want more.

You Can't Be Me

walkin' a mile in my shoes
is like walkin' through hell
walkin' a mile in my shoes
you most definitely going to fail

-Lil' Jonah

From The Beat: But if you walk all the way through hell, and leave its ways behind and as well as going to jail and doing time, you'll never have to live in a cell — you'll cease to fail.

Be YOU!

We're all unique in one way or the other. We all do things differently and handle situations differently so instead of you copying me and what I do, or anyone else for that matter, find your own identity and be true to yourself. If it's one thing that disturbs me is when ninjas or/and females try to bite off of me 'cause its not like I'm sayin' Pauly want a cracker! So stop tryin' to copy other individuals because you ain't them.

-Bianca

From The Beat: We know you're frustrated, feeling like people are cramping your style, but when you think about it, it should be flattering that people want so much to be like you. Take it as a compliment and maybe you won't be so upset by it.

What's Up Y'all

What's up y'all? This is Rev. Do, once more, and again. I'm at Camp, doing a good program so far, not getting no write-up's, doing very good.

I'm still having faith in my God, because in this place, you will need that faith. But you should have faith in what you believe, wherever you be. But anyway, God's still been good to me. I woke up this morning, and if you are reading this, then you had to wake up this morning, too — and this is a blessing right there in itself! Then we eat, talk, hear and even walk — do you know that each one of these things is a blessing?

What we need to do, is start thanking God for those blessings that He gives us each and every day. That is all I got to say today. God bless!

-Rev. Do

From The Beat: But don't just thank God with words! Show your appreciation for the blessings you've received by living the sort of life God wants to see you live — be a blessing to others. Stop doing wrong and make your every action a song of praise to the God of Love, for all your days!

Walking In My Shoes Ain't Easy

What's up, Beat? This Slick from Hayward. First off, I want to send my love to those doing time, whether in County or the Pintas (penitentiaries).

Well, walking in my shoes ain't easy. You have to always watch your back and stay on your toes twenty-four/seven. And every decision you make, counts, even da little ones. One day you could be on the block, the next in a graveyard. So you have to make sure you make the right choices. If not, it's a wrap.

Well, Beat, it's time for this soldado to go back to his room. 'Till pencil meets paper. Alratos. Much love to all out there.

-Slick

From The Beat: The first choice you need to make, is to step back from gang violence, for life's sake. That's the wrong choice. We, too, send love and support to all those imprisoned, but only a fool will choose to be in that position. And banging like a so-called soldado may make you feel macho, but you're fighting a war with no heroes and all victims, over drug money gangsters die or live life in prison — wrong decision!

Don't Walk In My Shoes

My opinion is that you shouldn't walk a mile in my shoes, because all it will do is get you into trouble with the law and everything.

Walking a mile, you will see things that you would see in movies: people getting stabbed, people getting shot! It's just the way it is in the 'hood. You will see all the homies representing the various East Bay 'hoods, but two of them are like my family — and I will put it down for them.

The sounds you will hear, could be anything. At times it could be kids playing' or at midnight, gun shots; or at times, hearing cars whipping it!

Well, you have to be really sharp in the 'hood, west to east, 'cause you could start funk anytime! It could be that you didn't know he was a homeboy from a different 'hood, and you get into a fight. That's when problems start.

Well, time is running short, so I got to go. I will holla at you later. Peace.

-Nasi

From The Beat: What you describe begins to seem like the entire universe to you, and all that is possible for you. However, the world is larger than these turf wars and gang wars. You need to outgrow this life, or you will be with your street family on the yard of a prison one day — still thinking that's the only life you can live. But you will have wasted your chance to live a life of freedom, working a job and bringing your pay home to your family — 'cause you will have traded a real family for those two gangs you call family.

Out of Jail All Summer

the best summer i ever had
was when i stayed out of jail that whole summer
and i had fun having water fights
and going swimming and stuff like that

-Young Slick

From The Beat: Every summer could be like that, all right? — if you just take a step back from that hardcore gangster life. You have nothing you need to prove, but a whole lot left to lose.

Pictures of My Dad

I own pictures of my father. He passed away a week after my third birthday. So that's something very sad that I own. And yes, they started off sad, because I didn't really spend much time with him. And yes, this is just plain sad.

-Juan

From The Beat: Yep, sad stuff — the dad you never had. That's rough. Do you look like him?

Treasury

(dedicated to myself and to love itself)
the sole search of need
the love of dream
the lust of sweet
there're eyes that sparkle faithfully
pleasure of trustworthy
closeness of destiny
kneeled prince will be in love with a queen
missin' feelings as it seems
livin' love is given to me
thereof is my treasury

-Lil' Mainy the Prince

From The Beat: Can there be such a thing as "love, itself" or is love something that only exists when given to someone else. Yes, they say you should love yourself, but what does that mean? Treat yourself as you would someone else, someone you love — remember you are a child of heaven above where the law is love.

Missing That View

Something that I miss about my home, is this view that's in front of my house. This one time I was in my van, getting high with my twin brothers. Then we went to my house and then sat on the porch — and it's pine trees and my mom's plants and cars! And it's sunny and that all was nice! Maybe it's because I was racked up on some grape, but on the real, them grapes be makin' me notice stuff. It's a lot more things I miss about my house, but that view go, when I'm high.

-StoneFace

From The Beat: You know marijuana is a mild hallucinogen. So it can make what you see (at least at first, before you start nodding off, tired) more vivid to your mind. Here's the thing though — now that you know how beautiful it is there on that porch, you don't have to get high to sit there and enjoy it. Just set your mind on taking the time to appreciate your surroundings, without choking back smoke — life gets a whole lot better. Take the best and leave the rest!

Best Summer

the best summer i had
was when everybody on my spot
was out of jail and everybody was stuntastic
you know twenty-four's everywhere on the block
twenty-two inch regals but you know
drama be happenin' if you don't know that five-oh
they be wantin' to tan ya boys
but that about it, see y'all
'cause you know i'm 'bout to get released
see y'all on the outs

-Quail

From The Beat: We hope you're out there having an even better summer this year, but staying clear of all that drama. If ya boys stay chill, five-oh won't do them ill. Ya feel?

In My Shoes

What's up, Beat and Beat readers? This that homeboy from Hayward, Lil' B, just droppin' a couple of lines for those locked down — but now to get to the topic at hand. Y'all askin' what it's like to walk a mile in my shoes.

Well, first you would have to patrol the 'hood for about half a day, to make sure no rival gang members come. And then, after that, you would probably get blurred by Task Force about two times. And as soon as night hits, that's when the funk really starts to pop, and I'll have to let be known. Ya feel? But that's all I can say about that. So, keep ya heads up in this Hall.

-Lil' B

From The Beat: This is one of the saddest pieces we have ever printed, and terrifying, too — 'cause you just don't see how foolish and destructive this life must be not just to your enemies but to you and everyone who lives in your neighborhood, too! Man, this is the kind of thinking that has so many locked up in the system. If you care about other incarcerated youth, stop being the living proof that there's nothing else society can do to protect itself from the likes of you than lock up and throw away the key, too.

Rough In My Shoes

If y'all was walking in my shoes, it'd be rough! Why? Because where I'm from, I got enemies all over. Once I see them, or they see me, it's funk on sight.

Sometimes if I don't have a thang on me, and I'm solo, I just hop fences 'cause they too deep. Then I get to my homeboy's house and tell him what's up, and we go out and look for the ones that were looking for me. After we put in work, we cut out to my homie's pad. You'll smell nothing but that purple rope. So that's what's up in my hood, walking in my shoes. But y'all never will walk in my shoes. Now I'm out. Late.

-Lil' Clumsy

From The Beat: Why would you want to brag about such stupid behavior? If you're lucky enough to get out of the line of fire, you are a big-time fool to go back out looking for trouble. On the real, we don't want to see your name in the obituaries — so stop this idiot behavior. And you call that "work"? You're getting worked by a gang war that's gone berserk, making someone else wealthy while life in "the varrio" gets more and more unhealthy!

A Sad Waste

the saddest thing i owned
was this car me and my friend bought
and i let him drive by himself
and i was out there on the turf
and he got the car towed and i was sad
because we went half on it and i wasn't with him
and it was a waste of money

-Young Slick

From The Beat: Get a job when you get free, and then take that money and buy yourself your own car. Live responsibly, and you'll not only go far, but the things you own you'll get to keep.

I Should Not (Have) Run From Camp

I was on the run from Camp for five months, and then I got caught by the police. I was driving, and the police pulled me over and asked me what my name was. I said my brother's name, but he had a warrant!

So the cop took me downtown and looked at some pic's, and he thought it was me. But when he took handprints, it pulled out my handprints, and he found out it was me. So, then the cop took me to Juvenile Hall.

I went to court, and the judge wants me to go to a group home — I just want one more chance to go back to Camp, so I can do it over. I know I can do better! If they let me go back, I will stay this time — and do it right. I just want this last chance, so I can do right.

-Kerry

From The Beat: Some people keep counting on that one more chance, one more time, all the way till they find themselves sentenced to the Y just because they chose never to try to complete a program but would always run. Whether you get another chance at Camp or you go to a group home, make sure you do it right and complete your program — then go home!

A Pin in My Leg

The best summer I had was '00. It was me and my brothers we had went to thirty-three stick and we took a bike and I took off and I got hit by a car and then I had to get a pin in my leg that summer, that summer was cool because I did not have to go to school.

-Ant

From The Beat: We know that you have more details about this experience, and we're looking forward to the next installments, especially because we know it was a struggle to get through - and you did get through it.

My Model is 50 Cent

The best summer I ever had was 2005. The reason why 2005 was my best summer is because I realize how old I was and I wasn't young any more so I had to figure out what I was going to do with my life.

My model is like 50 cent: Get Rich or Die.

What I mean by that is I got to do something to get some money or to start getting' rich too feel me? What I mean by die is just getting' around on the block not doing anything with my life, when you just sittin' on the block posted with all you ninjas grindin', you never know who gon' come through bustin' at you, that's why I say die.

-Jeremiah

From The Beat: That's definitely dying. Dying without even having lived... you're right, you need/deserve/can have more. How would you do it? We have some ideas, of course, but we want to hear yours. How much of your old live would you be willing to give up in order to have a new one?

It Would Not Be Nice

If you was in my shoes, it would not be nice.

Because where I walk in my shoes you hear gunshots, you will see people gettin' robbed, you will smell purple, you will meet the street, you will smell things like sanwich and a pot.

When I wake up in the morning the first thing on my mind is to be the first one on the block. For I ain't got to start stop then I go back to the house and get the heat then I go back to the corner and stop in the store and get a blunt roll, and sit on a rock and roll my sack. Then the next thing I know five-o hit the corner all on my line I give them my name and say I'm trolly and get on my way give these nocks what they fiend until them 5-0 find out, so don't be hot.

-Block fiend

From The Beat: Thanks for this detailed blow-by-blow of the first minutes of your day. Is there anything you could switch up, so that you would have not just a present but a future? It's not a pretty life, and we hope for you own sake and anyone who might get hurt in the process that you change it, but in the meantime, your eyes are wide open. Next time, tell us more, and sign your name, proudly, because you write so well.

No Worries

If money didn't exist, I wouldn't worry about anything. All I'd have to worry about is my enemies and the five-oh — that's it. 'Cause there's no money, I'll spend my time in the mall with hella beezies, throwing parties everyday at my pad.

Another thing I'll do, is get hella bottles from the liquor store and just drink. Then I'll get high every day, 'cause if there's no money I think you'll be bored. When you do the same thing everyday and you have everything you want, it could get boring. So I'll be traveling all over the world to see new things.

This is all I would do with no worries about money: free cars, houses, girls, weed, etc. You feel me!

-Clumzy

From The Beat: You understand the danger of boredom, and it's real. Getting high and partying gets old, too. You feel? What you'll need is a challenge in your life. Something toward which you'll strive, like getting an education or helping your community. And why would you even have enemies? Or have to worry about five-oh? You won't be committing crimes for the money anymore.

If I Had . . .

If I had the chance to walk a million miles
I'll run for your kiss
If I had to wish upon a star
I'll wish for your pain to go away.
If I could be by your side, I'll wanna stick to you forever
If I could hold your hand
I'll take you for another walk around the lake
If I could whisper in your ear
I'll tell you them special words you wanna hear
If I could fall asleep with you in my arms
I'll never wake up
If I could be your Teddy bear for you to hold 2 sleep
I'll be your cuddle bear.

-Lil' Kev Mien

From The Beat: As promised, we made sure to get this latest love poem in there. Keep writing, keep hoping, keep finding ways to hold those spirits up, keep teaching us on how you stay strong and hopeful under all this adversity!

My One Free Summer

The best summer I ever had was in 2005, because after being locked up for summers back to back to back, I was finally out for the 2005 summer and my birthday in the middle of the summer I had a lot of fun.

First in the beginning of the summer I was just chilling going out with my girl to special places, and my birthdays was getting' close. When it finally did, I had a hotel suite. Partly it was a lot of my friends there and a lot of people I didn't even know. After the party was over, me and my friends got into it with some enemies and they started shooting at us.

All I was hearing was bullets flying through my head. Well thank god I made it out of there. Safe.

Well the summer went by, and in August I went to Reno for Hot August Nights. I had a lot of fun and after that I was just doing what a normal person will do in the summer.

-Diego

From The Beat: OK, answer us straight up. When you look back on that summer, what are the memories you treasure the most? Is it the parties and drama? Or - and we're basing this question on other things you've said and written - or are they the quieter times, just the feeling of NOT being locked up, being able to go out in the sun when you want to, without having to wait for permission? We ask because we know you want so much more than just a summer here and there, and that drama - well, that drama = death, as you already know.

In My Shoes

walkin' a mile in my shoes
i'm telling you there'd be so much for you to do
because i'm into so much i don't know what to do
because i can't go into the town no more
my mom loves me and she comes to see me
a mother's love is so much above that other stuff

-Whitney

From The Beat: For your mother's sake, take off those thug shoes and get yourself a pair that will help you start your life anew. You need to stay free. Jail need not be your destiny. Why make your mother cry 'cause you get locked up or maybe even die?

RIP to my Fallen Soldiers

I miss all my ninjas and you will not be forgotten
. I'm going to keep holding it down and pimp this program to get out. It ain't the same without you.
We miss you my brothers.

RIP

Big Gill Willie
Davell
Armeezy
Mech
Mark Rhome
Lil'C
Mikey

-Lil Paul

From The Beat: This is a heartbreaking list to read. What can we do - all of us - to try and keep that list from getting longer? What must you do!

Beat, Be in My Shoes

What's up Beat. If y'all was in my shoes then you would feel good in some places and worried in some other places and another you would be feeling like a king.

And when you in my place you would see homeboys and some homegirls and all of them kicking back, smoking, drinking and you see all of them would be having fun and at the same time you have to be on ten toes, or you would get shot and that's what you would feel.

So that's it and I'll see y'all again!

-Jaymac

From The Beat: Like a king in some places, worried in some places. That's a terrific way to describe it... if there's anything about that life you'd want to change, what would it be? What's the hardest part? Do you think that the exhaustion of having to "step on ten toes" 24-7 might be part of why there's so much need for all the drank and smoke?

The Best Summer I Ever Had

The best summer I ever had, was like in 2004 — me and my patnas went dumb! We was on, all summer long! We went to Great America and the water slides like every other day. We was pullin' hella girls. We was on! Well, at least I was stayin' out of trouble back then.

-Momo

From The Beat: It just goes to show, life can be that good again if you know how to stay out of trouble! Forget all that stupid stuff that has you headed for hospitals, jails or death — have good, clean fun and do your best!

As I Lie

as i lie in a cage
trying to hide my rage
going stupid in the brain
wishin' one day
that i could be in the hall of fame
with no shame
my burning soul full of hate
trying to escape
the harsh ways of life
so i roll up some grapes
and blow away
all the feelings and pain
then it hit me
come back to reality
by a phone call from a knock
so i shake the spot
and i go back to a everyday life
yaddameen one

-OB'trice

From The Beat: There you were in max, stressing. Then you caught a break and find yourself at Camp, decompressing. But now, you sound like you're fixing to waste your opportunity to change your fate. Go back to smoking grapes on the block and seeking fame busting knocks, just to hide your feelings and pain — everything will end up the same. Find a new game! Quit and go legit before you blow it.

Money / And A Message To The Hood

— Money: If I didn't have to worry about getting money, I would probably be on my way to college, getting ready to get in the NBA! I could say, if I didn't have to worry about money, I probably wouldn't have made it to jail.

— Message to the hood: I would tell my hood to stay solid and ride their time out. And I'd tell 'em, we gonna be back on the street, 'cause no matter what, I'm going to be back on my block. Free my people — free the block!

My first topic here is an if: if I had my dream to have all the money I could want, I would focus on becoming the best basketball player. My second topic is real life: it's about a message to my hood, and it's the real 'bout what's going on.

-Kudah

From The Beat: What about if you had not all the money but enough to get by on, say if you had a nice little job after school — imagine! You wouldn't be here now! So, why do you insist on going back to the block? Reading your second paragraph for the meaning between the lines: everyone's in jail! No, no, no — that life on the block is not working for any of you. See? Don't keep going back to it till the system has you and throws away the key.

Do Good

Hey, what's up Beat? First of all, I wanna say what's up to my family in the Hall. Well, this week I'm going to write about coming to Camp.

It is hella clean when you get out the Hall — the air hella fresh and all you do is go to school and play all day, if no one runs away or gets in a fight. And if they tell you to do something, do as your told. So that way your program ends fast! 'Til next time, your homie Yoyo.

-Yoyo

From The Beat: You'll be going home for weekends by the time you read this response, if you've been following your own advice here. But now, on the real, we know you have, and we're glad — happy for you and your family, too.

Get That Money

Yo! This a message to all out there thuggin', out keeping it lit, hold down yo' end of it. Don't let nobody disrespect yo' biz. But stop all that female shhh. Ninjas get on this paper chase, just get yo' money! Ninjas grind, stack, flip, invest, and re-coop — and get that money! That's what it's all about, that money. Then the females will come like flies to honey.

-Baby Boi Mo

From The Beat: Look where you're at! Your paper chase has you wearing pants with no pockets. Got it? The dope game on the street will leave you either six feet deep or living in a penitentiary writing letters home about, "Where did I go wrong?"

Check In

Qvo, Beat! This that solid homie, Lil' Mark, from Hayward, dropping a couple liña's for you on how I'm doin' over in this max unit. Well, for me, I'm just doin' my tiempo as smoothly as possible and maintaining this weak program, chillin' with my homeboys, just postin'.

Yeah, I been incarcerated for about two months, but it's nothing. I got court on the first of June. I'm about to be that big eighteen, an adult-boi — yup, it's gonna feel good being that eighteen years old! Yup! So, hopefully, I get released. But I got to cut this string short and send this off with The Beat. I'm out.

-H-Fella

From The Beat: We hope you're doing more than just "posting and chilling" with the homeboys on the unit, 'cause if you aren't thinking about making some deep and essential changes in your life on the outs, turning eighteen will just mean you go to a different facility. You don't want to spend the rest of your life "pimping your time" — 'cause all that time will be pimping your life. Get your do-right on, and when you're free, stand strong.

The Beach

The best summer I ever had was 2003 because I went to the beach with my brother and his girl. It was fun because I saw a lot of girls and I talk to them so I got a lot of numbers too and I saw a lot of girls with big butta.

Then I went in the water and it was cold so I got out of the water. Then we went to Jack In The Box. Then after that we went to the house.

-Lil' B

From The Beat: This is a good memory to have. But you didn't tell us, which beach? Did you just go that one time, or was it an every day thing? Was it the first summer you went to the beach? How long was the longest you managed to stay in the water?

Is It Worth It?

it's a matter of how you see it we get high in the sky so we don't have to wanna be it standin' on the corner plus we hard like concrete have beef in the hood then you knocked off yo feet all on my block is knocks og's, trying to get it off still runnin' from police it don't matter if it's fast or if the block move slow but think about is it worth it not no mo'

-Young Dom

From The Beat: It fills your time, till you get caught for some crime or other. Then your locked up missing your moms, pops, sisters and brothers. That's if you don't catch a bullet, 'cause it all went down with you on the spot tryin'a pull it. Rise above the spot and give real success your best shot.

With Money

If I didn't have to worry about money, I would take my family to Hawaii. I would have so much fun that I would take my family anywhere they want to go, even if it was outside the United States. If I didn't have to worry about money, I would help the homeless and put them somewhere they will be warm. I would also support them with food and clothes, so the homeless would have a better life.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Give your family a holiday they'll never forget, and then spend money on the homeless! We feel the love in what you've said.

Worry 'Bout Yo' Own Turf

I been at Camp for like a few months now, and all these bootsie lil' ninja's stay talking 'bout they' turfs. You ninjas talk good shhh behind a ninja' back, and that's letting everybody know how fake you is.

You ninja's don't keep it treat. You ninja's is Camp bangers, and y'all ninjas bang wings of the dormitory! Keep it treat! I'm tryin' to do my program and get out to see my family. I don't know about y'all. If you from wherever and you don't like the way I'm getting at y'all, then maybe you betta give yo' momma a call. (RIP Grandpa, I love you.)

-Bra Dummy

From The Beat: We understand your frustration when you're just trying to do a good program, and all these others stay busy frontin' their turf for all their worth. It's just talk, so turn your back and walk away. It doesn't matter what they say. Don't even bother to talk back. Just do your program, 'cause your family wants you home. That's a fact!

Happiness Is No Money Worries

If I didn't have to worry about money, I would be happy! I would take my girl and my family on a trip around the world. I would feed them the best of foods from all around. We would have a great time and be happy together. Some of the places we would go would be Africa, Jamaica, China, and Brazil!

-Emmanuel

From The Beat: It does sound all good! But what will you do with your time and your money after you've circled the world and come back home to start a family with your girl?

Happy Mother's Day Everyday!

My mother is the best person in the world to me. If it wasn't for her, I would even be here today. I give my mom the utmost respect, and I will never disrespect her in any kind of way.

I will get on two knees for my mom because she's a beautiful queen! She's not only my mother — she's also my friend, my heart and my soul! Love you Mom!

-Anthony

From The Beat: Now show that love by quitting the life of a street thug. Your mom deserves to see you happy, prosperous and free!

I'm Gone!

It's been real, my ninjas up at Camp and in the Hall. To all that said I would hit that gate; and to all the ninjas that I stepped on to get here; and to all my real ninjas that had my back since 2005-2006; and to all my lost ninjas that look over me (RIP Cell, Jerm, Deshawn, D2); and to my cousin Molly — keep ya head up! This is the last time Camp or the Hall you will hear from me, Young Arlan Baby.

-Young Arlan Baby

From The Beat: We took out your crew call at the end, and to tell you the truth, it makes us wonder about what you intend. Go back to all that scheming, dreaming and dumb drama on the block, and you'll be back on lock up somewhere. Haven't you had enough of the system to do what it takes to stay out there?

Stand Tall

Beat! This Giggles up in max, from Newark. Well now to the main topic. I'm back again as you see, just up here in 150 max unit, posting with some camarados, that are going through the same circumstances this vato is going through — but as you see we stand tall through it all, motivating each other for the better.

Up in here we maintain and succeed, 'cause we have the pride of the ancient Aztecs running in our veins. So we just letting this tiempo pass us by. Well, let me close this theory of high maintenance survival with my utmost regards to those that are staying on the right path. Stay strong, loved ones. Alratos vatos.

-Giggles

From The Beat: It helps immensely to have comrades (or camarados) sharing your pain when you're incarcerated and looking forward to more of the same. And it surely is important to stay strong through adversity, but keep an independent mind — 'cause it was "group think" that got you here doing time.

Crossroad

stuck in a crossroad
living bad and bold
striving for the world's gold
flipping just to fold
in a game that been told
big boys with fat straps
who own the game map
plant messages in my rap
don't mess around and get slap
you don't want to be stuck in
this road been crossed
it might just leave you lost
gone up in the fog
blurry, left sitting on a log
watchin' the leap of a frog
short poem to leave you grown
on my own gettin' blown
in the zone with some pro tron

-Tq

From The Beat: You apparently think it's cool, to "plant messages" in your rap, about your gangsters staying strapped and all that. It's straight-up mulish, and it means you're getting sucked back into the mind-set that will have you pushing up daisies or locked in the pen' feeling like you're going crazy. Why is it so many turn back to that same old self-destructive act just before they get released. Yeah, props for doing a good program, but if you go back to the same old crap, you just wasted a year of your life in the Hall and here at Camp. We say this because we care about you, and we know you have the intelligence to think your way to a better conclusion, than returning to that "we're the hardest crew" delusion. When you hear the same words coming out of both sides mouths — you know sanity has gone south, and you will soon follow. Is it fear making you sound this shallow?

Money Is Everything

If I had all the money I need, I would still worry about my money. People rob the rich! So I'd be very worried about security. All my family would be living with me. So I would take every precaution to keep my family and my money safe.

Money is everything! With money, you can have anything you ever dreamed! With money, there are no worries, except for worrying about people like me, who will try anything to get their hands on that money. I'd keep my guns on me, and I'd keep my girl and family close. I don't know if I'd be able to handle it, 'cause that's always been my main worry.

-Ricky

From The Beat: We'd say your girl and your family are everything, and money is just a tool. A gun is a tool, too, but it's a tool that kills. You feel? Banks keep money safe; your carrying a gun won't. Safe communities keep families feeling secure when your carrying a gun won't. Rise above the gangster mentality.

Again I'm Heated

Again, I'm heated. I'm going to be eighteen in a few days, and now this is going to be my second b-day I've been locked up! But I'm going to be eighteen this time, so as soon as I get out I'm hitting the strip-club CIP status. RIP all fallen soldiers.

-Scotty Do-Wop

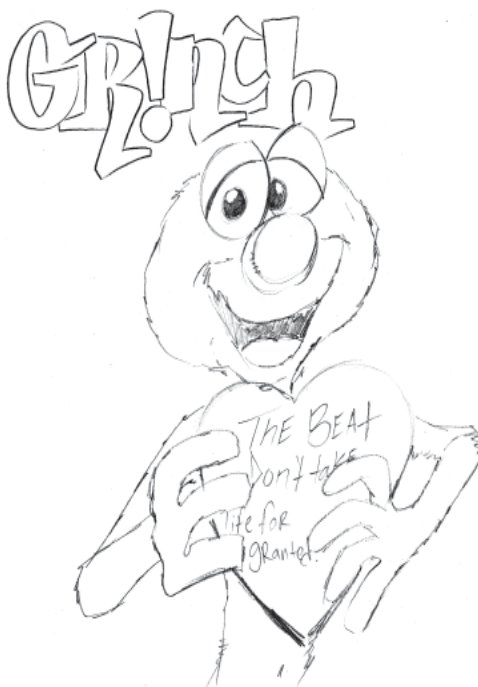
From The Beat: Turning eighteen could mean so many more hopeful and responsible things than a license to party. We'd like to see you say, you'll live a better life with mature adult status, okay? Getting "heated" is how you get yourself defeated.

Worry About Life

if i didn't have to worry about money
i would worry about my life
money isn't important
it's just materialistic stuff
but your life is real
and you only have one
so you worry about what you have to live for
and not the money
'cause the money is always going to be there

-Lil' Jonah

From The Beat: It's a trip, because everything you say here is true in the world exactly as it is. Of course, you have to worry about making money, but if you start doing things for money that, for example, send you to lock up — then all those things that you wanted the money for in the first place are gone from your life because you've gone to jail — and your loved ones are seeing neither you nor your money. Keep first things first, always, no matter what. Don't trade your freedom for material stuff.



Message To My People

this a message to my people
change 'fore the devil see ya
slip in and come through tryin' a change and be ya
don't let him take over
'cause it's nothing but trouble
back then to get the paypa i was pullin' lil'
hustles
undercover
never wanted to be a couple
with nobody
before it goes bad
better find some different homies
and change
just find a better way
'fore yo life end up goin' down the drain

-Buddamilk

From The Beat: Find a better way to make your pay than playin' with your freedom. There are other choices if you can slow down long enough to see them. Reach, preach and teach 'em, Buddamilk!

If I Had Money To Buy What I Want

If I did not have to worry about money, first of all, I would have a multi-million dollar house in Berkeley hills. Inside there would be a indoor greenhouse, a hot tub, swimming pool, a movie theater, a pool hall, a bowling alley, and a basketball court — all inside, along with a full bar, two bedrooms with two bathrooms attached to each bedroom.

Outside would be another hot tub and pool with a go-kart track, a big wooden-deck patio with a cover over it, with a juke box, turn tables, and some outside speakers. I would have a four-car garage with four cars in it. The first car would be a 1978 Monte Carlo on some twenty-two inch chrome rims with four twelve-inch subs in the trunk. My second car, would be a Chrysler 300C, converted into a limo. My third car would be a Cadillac Escalade on twenty-eight inch rims with four fifteen inch subs in the back. And my last car would be a '64 Impala with switches on it.

-Living Large

From The Beat: Well, that's quite a spread, chock full of toys and entertainment. I think most of our readers will be with you one hundred per cent on this. But now that you have everything you want, what are you going to do with your life? Who are you going to spend your time with, doing what? And after the partying gets older than stale bread, what are you going to do to occupy that lively mind inside your head?

My Update, My Thoughts

What's good, Beat? How is life treating y'all? I hope and pray that it's good. This Lil' Chuckie, writing from Camp. I'm good, just pimpin' this Camp. Oh man, hold on vatos — I gotta go see my PO!

Simon, vatos. I'm hella happy now. I just found out that i go home for my TR (temporary release) on May twenty-seventh. I need glasses, so I'll be in Hayward from eight-thirty till five-thirty "pimpin'!" And the next weekend, I go home for my first HV (home visit)! I've been waiting to hear that, and now that I hear it — I can hardly believe it! But it's true. I'm goin' to Hayward! Tu sabes? I can't live without my familia waiting there for me!

But, yeah, what gets me mad is that these ninjas here be running their mouths. They don't run up though, 'cause that's how they are.

These linias I'm about to break down go straight up to my homies in 150 maximum security. I'm not saying no names, but to my homie "No Neck" — ha ha ha ha! What's good, homie? How you living behind that door. Ay vato, I can't write to you 'cause I lost the paper where you and the other homie wrote down all y'all's info, but I hope you reads this so you know I haven't forgotten you and that I'm thinking of you. Ay, I know you're reading this in The Beat because you're locked up behind that door with nothing else to do but read! So, after you read these linias, know that your vato in Camp is praying for you.

Man, Beat, I still can't believe I'm out to Hayward in two more weeks! You know, there have been some vatos running from Camp, but them ninjas is stupid for doing that! But anyway, today is Tuesday and I gotta go get some Camp clothes. So to all, be safe. This vato is out.

-Lil' Chuckie

From The Beat: At least you offer some advice to folks at Camp that's worth hearing — don't run 'cause when you do your program you get those TR's and HV's. Finish your program and get your release with no warrant having you look over your shoulder every time you hear a car pass. And we feel you wanting to send your support to those facing serious charges and serious time locked up in max, but what advice do you have for them? Be safe, doesn't say much. Finally, we have to say we don't like that phrase "pimping my program" or whatever, because it implies that there's something fake going on, and when you're out — you go back to the same stuff that brought you here. Only next time you probably won't be lucky enough to get Camp time. You might be in max like your homies. Get some skills while you're at Camp. Work toward your high school degree or your GED, 'cause it will help you get a job on the outs — and that will help you stay away from stupid crimes that will get you locked up again, if not shot. Still, we're happy you're doing a good program and that you're getting (by the time you read this you will have already gotten) that TR — next up HV's!

Money is everything! With money,
you can have anything you ever dreamed!

Monea

how sweet the child
words from my monea
sunlight is her brightening smile
been through above and down
her cries fall from her cheek into clouds
way beyond love —
it's a feeling never felt
my monea a taurus
she gives all the time
what others need to take
she brought me into this world
monea there is no mistake
i'm that first child
i'm dreamin' okay
but i'm livin' life with no sun
rainy days because the rain
my tears become
i love you monea
from your only son

-Lil' Mainy the Prince

From The Beat: Such songs of deepfelt loss and love, rise on the wings of angels to heaven above. These words explain your sadness, but don't use them as an excuse for the madness of self-destructive behavior — rather let Monea's eternal love act as your personal saviour. Make her proud as she looks down from the clouds — on her only son doing what needs to be done.

Never Stop

i try to be everything i can
and i am
but when it's time to get down drop
i never stop
listen to what i'm sayin'
'cause i'm not playin'
everyday is a new day
never time to play
this is a cold world
now we're killin' each other
why can't we help one another
never stop
but guns will pop
all day and all night
till bodies drop
but i will not stop

-Lil' Bra

From The Beat: Don't stop trying to better yourself. Don't stop trying to accumulate wealth. But get a better plan than trying to be the only man who can beat the street and the system, too. 'Cause you're only fooling you. Don't stop thinking about what you need to do, and you'll see through the grind — unless you've already stopped using your mind and left your sanity so far behind you can no longer find the truth. Stop acting the foo!

No Worries With Comfort

i feel we all fiend
for the same struggle
but dreaming of cash overflow
leads only to trouble
nobody ever wonders the steps
after reaching wealth
just the thoughts of "getting ours"
no matter others' health
we breathe in earth
and exhale pure greed
the green in our eyes
drives us to succeed
my thought of success
no worries with comfort
this "go in" after money"
will just leave us in wonder
if money was not an issue
i might really love life
but that's ...

-Kid Hustle

From The Beat: You lay down truth in rhyme that makes you think while we feel like we're flyin'. Still you leave us wondering what you would do if you had "no worries with comfort" — would you choose a challenge or just feel done for?

I will go to all the kids that's
in foster care
and help them out —
I'll find their parents

Came Back to Lock Up

What's up Beat? This your boy Gorilla writing from the juvenile hall. Well, yes, I did run from Camp. That place got me tired, so I just cut. I had been there, transferred from Hillcrest — but sometime this week, I'm supposed to go back to Hillcrest. I don't know what they going to do with me yet, but I hope to get out soon. Then I can be back out there with my lady and my kid because I miss them!

All in Camp that know me, stay up! To all in the halls, camps, CYA's and the Pen's, stay strong. (This weekebd is Mother's Day, so I wish everyone a Happy Mother's Day.)

-Gorilla

From The Beat: Man, we couldn't believe it when we heard you ran from Camp, with only three weeks left to do after being there for a year! But we could see your mind slipping back toward your old, hardcore, don't-give-a-what attitude. Now that you're a father, you really can't afford to indulge that way of thinking. Your child deserves better than you got. You feel?

What's Up Beat

What's up wit' it, Beat? This Lil' B from Hayward, just droppin' a couple of lines for those locked down in the Hall, CYA, pen', everywhere and anywhere.

But anyways, I'm just postin' up in this unit, marinating, waiting for my time to pass. I go to court in a couple of weeks, and I'm gonna get a self-release 'cause I'm eighteen now. But yeah though, before I cut, I wanna send my people in the Hall my best regards; keep your heads up and stay safe.

-Lil' B

From The Beat: We wish you could let yourself drop the gangster mask for just an instant. The vision you'd see would change how you see everything. As is, you're condemning yourself to jails, hospitals, and an untimely death by violence. It's not worth it.

Introduction

this is our introduction
keep this something
small and sweet
this is our introduction
to everybody in the beat

-Kev

From The Beat: No turf calls, no threats. Welcome to our pages, 'nuff said.

Then I Cried

you was you, and me was i
mad a mistake, doin' some time
leave me then, don't wait
alone, i'll be learnin' from them mistakes
we searched our love enough
just to remember, a song about us
i understand the cries
maybe only from the lovely lips, the passion
dripped dry
the funny thing's, never have i reason to laugh
you push away, so far i grab
i tried reachin' the highest clouds
softly takin' things slow, so that everything we
do is

[to be continued]

-Lil' Mainy the Prince

From The Beat: It's unusual to get an unfinished piece from you, unless your ending is ironic and "to be continued" comments back on the poem's topic. Sometimes the best we can do with a disappointment in love is remain philosophical about it.

Will Worry About I Will Do

If I didn't have to worry about money, I will worry about my kids — because I'm going to have a lot of them! And if I don't have to worry about money because I have more than I need, I will give the poor people something, too, for a good deed.

And for myself, I will get one of them hearts that don't stop! And I will go to all the kids that's in foster care and help them out — I'll find their parents! I can't explain what all I'll do, but it will be a lot more than just what I've written here. But, for now, I'm done.

-Stoneface

From The Beat: We admire the size of the heart you have inside you right now! You show a generosity of spirit rare in the world today. With this plan of yours, we wish you did have all that money, plus a heart that won't stop ticking!

this is a cold world
now we're killin' each other
why can't we help one
another

Momma

Momma, I'm sorry for all the stress and drama I'm causing you once again. I know I put you through all this last year, and I promised I wouldn't never come back — but now I'm back here again.

I'm writing this to say that I love you and that I'm going to show you I'm not coming back here ever again, show you by actions and not just words. Momma, I love you! And happy Mother's Day from your one and only son.

-Scotty Do-Wop

From The Beat: We're so sorry to see you back here again. You had many challenges doing that good program that set you free from Camp, and you rose above them to succeed. We did see a passionate intensity in you that sometimes seems to lead you to do things that you shouldn't, whether it's with a young woman or with the boys in the 'hood. We urge you to stay chill and keep doing good.

If I Didn't Have To Worry About My Money

If I didn't have to worry about money, I wouldn't have much to worry about. The only thing that would be on my mind, would be my family.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: What would you do for your family if you time free from chasing money, or maybe enough money to buy time?

RIP

First of all I like to say rest in peace Lil' Wag and Nitro. See, I been in the halls for about two or three weeks, but on 4-30-06 my mother came and gave me some bad news. She told me that the homier Marcus got shot and killed and it was nothing I can do about it but go to my room and cry. Now, that's the second young homier that got killed, an' all I'm go say is this beef shhhh never stop. I'm out.

-Lil' Ant B1

From The Beat: We are so sorry that at your young age you've already experienced the violent death of two friends! It shouldn't be this way. But even if you were not locked up, what else could you do about it except cry? Whatever answer you give, it won't bring back your friends, and it's that knowledge that seems to be missing from the calculations of too many young men. Are you planning to do anything different when you get out so that someone doesn't have to write a sad poem about you?

My Last Time

Well, this will be the last time you would see my writing in The Beat. I guarantee that. I'm in juvie because of my friend. She snatched a purse and I was with them. My court day is tomorrow so I'm gone.

But when I was here — I'm not gone lie — I cried a few times, because there's no place like home. When I'm in my cell I'm just hoping that God will answer my prayer. Most of the time He doesn't, and I wonder is there a God. That does cross my mind.

Just three days ago I was asleep in my own bed, in my own room, and in my mother's house. So things do change real quickly. But hey, life goes on. You have your good times and bad times. But one day we would all be dead. And there's a new future of us ahead. So we should make the best of life.

I'm going to be honest. When I'm at school and The Beat Within come, I skim through it and look at the pic in the front. So whoever this is that's reading this, keep in mind that when you're reading this, there's people dying and suffering and depressed and crying and at the same time you wish you could help them but you can't. But guess who can help them, theirself. So in situations, make sure to keep others in mind. When you're suffering, more people are suffering and gone.

-DeMario B2

From The Beat: Thanks for being honest, DeMario. We wish you the best and hope that you will make better friends in the future, ones that will not get you caught up and thrown into jail. We don't know if there's a god or not, but we do know that just because you don't hear God's reply to your prayer doesn't mean that you aren't getting an answer. Maybe the answer is one you don't want to hear — like being in the hall. But if you really show your concern for others, as you express in this piece, we think you'll be answering your own prayers. And by the way, you can always write for The Beat, even if you stay free for the rest of your life, which is what we're praying for...

Walkin' A Mile In Our Shoes

If you were in my shoes, my feet will take ya on the bus going to chill wit' the USOs on the block, smoking cigs and weed. People in da house sometimes drinking. When da day is over my feet will take a long-ass one-hour on the bus back home.

Da next day my feet might take you to go see my dad. Next day just stay home, chill in my house wit' my ninja, smoke cigarettes/ blacks and weed every day. And do the something every day sometimes.

-Lil' Maine B2

From The Beat: This is a very interesting (and somewhat frightening) tour. What about those times, like now, when the 5-0 pick you up, throw you in the back of a black and white, and lock you up? Will we see any of that?

RIP Marcus

Man my ninja got killed
Only 17... I'm ready to murk something
Why all my ninjas die
Sometime I feel like ain't no god
I'm just like, "Forget the world!"
I'm just ready for all this shhhh to end
So many people I love dying
I don't know what to do

-Lil' Stacks B1

From The Beat: This is an ongoing tragedy, Lil' Stacks, a slow-motion civil war. All we can tell you is that if you jump into the mix, if you take it on yourself to get even for the death of your friends, you'll just be contributing to the same "shhhh" that you want to end... So, what are your plans when you get out of here... and what are you doing back here, anyway?

Too Many Days

Man, been here 64 days
Now they trying to send me down by LA
Got to do 270 more days there
But the times I've been here, I think it's fair
But if I stay or leave I really don't care
'Cause I think it will be good for me

-Pinquino B2

From The Beat: Just take this time to rethink and straighten up your life. This is a chance to think about what you want and what you are looking in life. It sounds like you're going to LA with the right mindset. Make the most out of it.

Mexican Summer

The best summer I ever had was when I went to Mexico to go see my mom for the first time in my life. And when I went to the beach there was a whole bunch of girls and they were fine too.

-Victor B1

From The Beat: So let's get this straight — you went to Mexico to meet your mother for the first time, but all you can tell us about is some fine girls at the beach? Do you think you might be able to share a detail or two about your mom?

My Best Summer

My best summer was when I played for the Hawks. Two years ago I played quarterback and I planning to play this year.

-Del'von B1

From The Beat: Like we said before, Del'von, don't write about all our topics. Choose just one and concentrate on it. Tell us more, like who the Hawks are, and why you would give up being a quarterback to come here...

The Saddest Thing You Own

I have a picture of my granddad an' he's no longer wit' us.

-Del'von B1

From The Beat: One of the reasons we want you to write about just one topic instead of all three is because we want to know more than you can tell us in one or two sentences. For example, why is the picture of your granddad important to you? What role did he play in your life? When and how did he die? What would he say to you if he could have just five more minutes of your time? All those things would have been nice to read about...

Walking a Mile In My Shoes

If you walk in my shoes you would see shooting and selling. It a crazy life nowadays. I would take you straight to the 'hood. It's like Gunsmoke all the time.

-Del'von B1

From The Beat: Are you part of the Gunsmoke action, or do have the inner strength and courage to do something different?

No Group Home

I went to court and I thought I was going home. They say group home and I don't want to go. I don't now how long, but if I have to go for five months I'm running until I'm 18. I never been to a group home. I can't leave my mom for a group home. I been in YGC for two months. Can't wait until I go home for I can see my family. I miss my family. I got to get out so I can see what going on with my friends and mom.

-Andre B1

From The Beat: It worries us to read this, Andre, because you're thinking like a child instead of the young man you are, and that thinking will lead you right back here! First, when you tell us that you've never been to a group home but you'll run if they send you there for more than five months, you are telling us that you have prejudice — judgment before you know. Why not approach whatever comes with an open mind? At least open yourself up to the possibility that wherever they send you may be in your best interests. But even if it turns out not to be in your best interests, running is certainly not. You say you will run because you can't leave your mom for a group home, but we can almost guarantee that if you run, you may get home, but you won't be able to stay long. You'll end up locked back in the system, farther from home than before! It's not enough to act on your immediate desires without looking down the road to see what comes next. That's the mark of maturity we don't see in this piece.

A Mile In My Shoes

If you were to walk a mile in my shoes, where would my feet take you? I tell you, it'll take you to someplace you never been. What sights you would see is gangstas and potheads, and just people you think who is not important.

How would you contact ourselves? You can contact people by cell phone or people in the 'hood that know people. What kinds of thing would you smell? You be smellin' lot of fresh air and lots of cigs and pot, I tell you hella weed.

-Ying Yang B2

From The Beat: This doesn't sound like a neighborhood anyone wants to be in. If this description is an accurate one, do you plan to spend your entire life here, or do you have plans to get out? What will you do when you get out of here? What will you do to stay out of here?

Walkin' A Mile In Your Shoes

If you were in my shoes, my feet would take you around the whole Mission District. You would see hella homies drinkin', smokin' and kickin' it. You would meet hella homies. I know what sounds you would hear.

-Tha Kidd B2

From The Beat: Will we also be seeing people getting hurt? Will we be hearing gunshots or sirens? What about people shedding tears for their loved ones lying dead in the streets? Oh yes, and will we see young men like you being taken away to jail?

Still Here

I'm still here. Damn! I can't wait to go home. Man, I can't wait to just get some fresh air and be me. I can't wait to see my mom. My life is going to be ok when I get out. My life is so dead right now.

-Man-Man B1

From The Beat: What are you going to do to make your life be ok when you get out? What do you plan to do that you didn't do before, and what do you plan to not do that you did before?

Walkin' A Mile In Your Shoes

Was up beat I'm Lil' C, and walking in my shoes is like walking in a movie, Man, 'cause I'm gangsta like that with the Chuck Taylors and some Dickies on. Man, trying to do it real big, trying to stay away from the po-po, Man, 'cause they ain't no good once they wrapped you up, specially if you're high or drunk. That's when it gets really crazy son. Peace out to all my homies on the outs.

-Lil' C B4

From The Beat: If you know "it gets really crazy" when you're drunk or high, then why get drunk or high? If this is an example of you trying to "stay away from the po-po," then we think you should consider a new line of work. It's pretty obvious to us that you're not making it in your current choices...

Summer Memories

The first summer I had was fun is when I first got to drive my mom car. She let me drive around the block before so that it could dry off, and since that day she let me drive. Ever since I've been taking my little brothers to school. That was the best summer ever had.

-Travelin B4

From The Beat: Your mother put a lot of trust in you, and she was taking a chance when she did it. Do you always live up to the trust she places in you? Do you think you owe her something that you haven't yet delivered? What can you do to pay back that trust, which means, what can you do to get back with your mother and not risk being taken from her again?

Take A Walk In My Shoes

Was up Beat? If you take a walk in my shoes, you'll see dope fiends, police, and gangstas like myself. You'll have to duck and dodge the police 'cause you got to get that money. I'm out.

-Menace B2

From The Beat: We guess you forgot to "duck and dodge the police" since you're in here. You're making money, all right, but you're making it for all those who depend on you being processed through the system — the DA, the PD, the PO, the judge and the counselors. They want to thank you for putting money in their pockets.

I'm Back

What's up Beat? Yeah, I'm back, and I'm kinda mad at myself for being here... I just did 11 months in the Ranch, but I ain't trippin' 'cause everything happens for a reason. But when I get out, ya boy got to make it work!

-J Boom B4

From The Beat: Those two words ("I'm back") are the two we hate reading the most! If everything happens for a reason, what do you think the reason for your coming back is? Could it be for you to reconsider the way you're living your life, so that you can make the changes you need to make so that you never again have to write those two deadly words: "I'm back."

The Best Summer

I think the best summer I will have is the one coming up because I now have the knowledge of being locked up. So when I get out I will be able to think smarter and make the right decisions to stay out of here. Also because I get to do the things I want to do unlike last summer.

-Cito B4

From The Beat: We wish you would put a little more explanation into that phrase, "think smarter and make the right decisions..." We hope that means you will stop doing what leads you into the halls, start doing what leads you into a better future (finish school!), and basically flip the script.

A Mile In My Shoes

If you were to walk in my shoes my shoes, they would take you to the block. You would be seeing all the homies on the block; you could see a lot of pretty faces; you would see fat cars on 22's; you would meet all the homies and chill with them.

You would hear gun shots, people screaming, kids having fun. You would smell weed, alcohol and you would smell freedom. You would walk and run. You would walk to talk to the girls. You would run if you heard gun shots.

-Al-Bundy B5

From The Beat: Is the smell of weed and the sound of gunfire the same as the smell of freedom? Would your shoes ever take us to school? To basketball games? To family gatherings? And what about when your shoes lead us to the hall. What do we do then?

I Can Show More Than Tell

Well, well, well. If you walk in my 'Forces, Man, you goin' to the 'hood off top. Well, you ain't goin' to the 'hood because you already in the 'hood, so you gone walk about 15 feet, then you gone be on the block. And that's where it all goes down.

You gone see everybody, from rappers to thugs to kids that's fin to be both. Then you could walk around. Up or down. You gone see real cats and fake cats and snitches, 'cause every set got cats that's real and cats that fake. But if you like me, you could spot the real from the fake real fast and just stay away from 'em.

But I can't really tell you too much about my life in my shoes on paper. If you really want to know and see for yo'self, you just gone have to walk wit' me when I get out 'cause I can tell you and I can show you. But I can show you better than I can tell you.

It's ya boy, Vinny. Holla back like I called ya name.

-Vinny B5

From The Beat: You make it sound like a place to stand back and watch the world go by, as if you aren't an active participant in what goes down. So, if we let you be our tour guide when you get out, how much dirt will you be doing along the way — and what will we do if they wrap you up right there, take you back to the hall, and leave us all by our lonesome?

Wish You Were Mine

I wish you were mine
You worth way more than a dime
Come on baby let's take our time
One of these days I want you to be mine
You too damn fine
Trust me I won't waste my time
I wish you were in my life
When I talk to you on the phone
You used to make me feel good
I wish you could have treat me better like you should
You made me feel real bad
You made me really sad
What I'm sayin' is what happen to me will happen to you
you know what to do.

-Billy B4

From The Beat: There are mixed messages in this piece, Billy. You clearly have strong feelings for Tessa, but just as clearly, she did you wrong. So, what do you think your future is with her? Will she be there for you when you get out, or will you have to find another girlfriend? And by the way, if she's so damn fine, why did you let yourself be taken from her? It sounds like you have to change one or two things in your own life in order to have a good and long-running relationship.

A Mile In My Jordan's

Yeah, man, this is young Fabe back at y'all. This topic is about "A mile in my shoes," but I be wearin' the 23's, y'all know Jordan's. But y'all know wifey be keeping me fresh to death.

I be smellin' trees that my ninjas be blowin' and alcohol, but this is my life. You walk up to the cute girls and run when the shots is fired.

So try to walk a mile in my J's baby. Yeah, I'm a hustler.

-Young Fabe B5

From The Beat: You forgot to tell us about that side trip your shoes take you to, that detour from the block to the hall! You may be a hustler, but we wonder what you're hustling while you're locked up? And what's a good man with a good "wifey" doing waling up to those cute girls?

I Need A Haircut!

If I don't get my hair in three days I'm am going bad on the first person that crosses the line. I am real serious about getting my hair cut fa real, and I'm hot right now 'cause punk-ass staff is sittin' on they ass and not do what there paid to do.

-J-Son B5

From The Bear: Interesting... You get yourself locked up, then blame the staff for not servicing you as fast as you want to be serviced. Tell us, just what do you think the staff gets paid to do?

A RIP Shirt

The saddest thing I own is a RIP shirt of my big homie, Chino. And a picture of my other homie, Joker. Both of them passed away within a week of each other so it was really sad to realize that they were no longer going to be here. And share some of the good times we shared in the past together.

I try not to get sad when I first go back and look at the pics because I remember all the nights we kicked it on the block getting drunk and acting stupid. But then it always comes to me that they are gone and never coming back. RIP Chino. RIP Joker

-Huero B4

From The Beat: This is truly sad, Huero, and we feel the pain you're feeling. You can't bring back Chino or Joker, or any of the hundreds and hundreds of other young men (and women) who have died violently and prematurely. But you can change things in your own life to reduce the possibilities that you will be joining them any time soon. Are you planning to change, or are you planning to risk your own life and future by continuing your old ways?

Life Is Like Hell

Life is like hell
At a young age
There's no way out

-No Tali LCRS

From The Beat: Your poem is so sad, No Tali. You sound resigned that there are no options for you, other than the ones you've already considered. But life can offer you alternatives you've never thought of. You don't write what is causing you to feel trapped in a future in hell, but why don't you talk to a counselor, someone you trust in your family, or us from The Beat?

My Shoes

If you were in my shoes you really wouldn't go that far. We would be doing the same shhh every day, walking from the house to the block, to the store to get some drank, kick it with the homies house. Chill with breezies, go back to the block, kick it all night, go home... and the next morning do the same shhhh all over again.

-Enano B4

From The Beat: Damn this sounds like a boring existence, Enano. We notice you never mentioned school... and you also never mentioned coming to the hall. Is school left out by accident, or do you just not go? We hope it's not that, because school is the most important tool available to you, a key to your future freedom. With it, you could create a much more dynamic, much less routine life. Without it, your options are reduced to close to zero.

Tattoo'd Tears

My life has been filled with tattoo'd tears.
Smile now smile later has been my motto fo' the past few years Straight up convict surrounded by money and felons
Yellin' free OG Indio servin' 25 to life, but who da hell am I tellin'?
Ride wit' a chosen few that don't care if they die tomorrow. Though to me it's irrelevant, I know I have a price to pay.
Only God can judge me, that all I have to say.
To all my fellow homies doing time, keep y'all head up!

-Lil' Moreno B5

From The Beat: By "straight up convict," are you saying your fate is to be a prisoner? Or are you saying that your life is like a prison? You may be right that only God can judge you in the ultimate cosmic sense (judging where you'll spend eternity), but on this Earth, a lot of other people are given the power to judge you, too. And while their judgments may seem irrelevant to you, they affect your very existence. You can yell for Indio to be freed, but you know it's not going to happen. That is something to think very hard about, because once in that situation, all your yelling will fall on deaf ears.

Why I'm Back Up Here

I had just got out like a couple weeks ago and I got released to a group home here in the city. I was only out four days and I ran. Every day after I ran all I've been doin' is getting drunk and popping pills. I lost hella weight.

I only ran to have my freedom and to be with my boyfriend. I'm back up here because a friend let me borrow a car, gave me and my man the keys. So we went driving different places after 12 a.m. At first he wouldn't let me drive. So I said, "Let me drive by the beach. It gon' be empty and no police."

Then he drove to the beach. He stopped, got out, and let me drive. So I'm driving coo' until I see a police car in front of me. I got scared so I hit the brakes and you heard it so the police backed up and my boyfriend just told me to park to the side because we have to get out. So I did that. Then that was it. We both got took.

I lied about it my age and name and stuff, but at the end I just told the truth, so now I'm back up here and I'm stressing hella hard. I miss my friends, cousins, the block, and of course my man.

-Smiley Wifey GU

From The Beat: No, you're not back here because a friend let you use a car; you're back here because you decided what you wanted to do is more important than what the court told you to do. That desire for instant gratification, without concern for the consequences, is the thing you most have to overcome: childhood! You need to demonstrate some adult responsibility, which often means doing things we don't necessarily want to do but know that we must anyway. Your boyfriend, at least, had the sense to stop when you saw the police. We can easily imagine you trying to outrun them because you wanted to "have your freedom," and then you'd be paying even bigger consequences. The fact that you are stressing, that you miss your friends, your block and your man is 100% the product of your choices.

My Best Summer

My best summer was the summer before I went into freshman year of high school. My friends and I would hang out every day after summer school. We did everything together. This was the point in my life when my parents gave me a little more freedom. I just think this was my best summer because it was the first summer I spent without just staying home all day.

-Cake GU

From The Beat: What kinds of things did you do that summer? What do you do during the summers now? Will you be able to enjoy this summer, or will you be in the system? What does that tell you?

A Summer Of Fun, And Then...

The best summer I had was last year 'cause I was making a thousand every other two days. I had bought me hella pairs of Jordans, me and my close friend. I bought me and my cousin cell phones.

We was going to Great America. We kept getting on top gun. We was sneaking on the rid even when the park was closing. We also was going to Six Flags, Marine World... we was trying to do a lot of things.

I also bought me a car, then I ended up buying another one. I liked the second the most. It was a Lincoln Continental. Even though the money wasn't earned through a positive way, I still had fun with it.

When I get out, I will I will make sure I make it in a positive way. That was the best summer I had, not ever, but had.

-Ebony

From The Beat: Did you pay cash for your Continental? If so, then we know whoever you bought it from was as willing to break the law as you because he had to know that much money was not obtained legally. We don't know how you were making 2K "every other two days," and we don't really want to know... Anyway, it sounds like you had quite an adventure. But more important than that, it sounds like you are feeling the pressure of being someone else's prisoner, and you don't much like it. We don't like it, either, so we hope you make good on your promise to "make it in a positive way" when you get out, because any other way is a prescription for more of this.

An Interview With D Skerts

TBW: We'd love to interview you today, D Skerts. We're sorry you still can't write because you got shot in the hand and still have that brace on it. How is your hand feeling?

DS: It's okay.

TBW: Does it still hurt?

DS: Not anymore.

TBW: What would you like to talk about today? What's on your mind?

DS: I want to tell you about what I like about Squires (the Omega Boys' Club project, through which Jack Jacqua takes six or seven young men from Log Cabin Ranch to visit San Quentin Prison once a month, to give them a sense of what prison is like, to help them become determined to change whatever they need to, to be sure that they never end up there.) I like Squires because when I go there, it inspires me to do right things because I wouldn't want to be in that situation.

TBW: You mean in San Quentin?

DS: Yeah. The few times that I went there, I had great communication with some of the inmates. They taught me knowledge, respect, responsibility, the ability to be accountable for my actions. The seven months that I've been in Log Cabin, Squires is the only program that made me change my ways, my actions, my life.

TBW: Good for Squires! Can you explain? How did Squires change you?

DS: I changed my ways because I looked at my life seriously—locked up is a place I wouldn't want to be. Squires put me on track.

-D Skerts LCRS

From The Beat: We hope that you telling us about what Squires means to you and how visiting San Quentin has opened your eyes to a future you are determined won't happen to you, will help Beat readers, Jack Jacqua and Omega's terrific Squires program, D Skerts. You go!

Her Crown

I think life is a witch
When you are young
An' you see your friend get hit
And not make it to twenty-six

I think life is tough
When you are left alone
An' 'cause of that
You never wanna be at home

I think I gotta be strong
To hold my crown
An' I think it's hard
To hold my own
For so long

And now
I have to go home
So I won't be alone
Smoke me a blunt

I have to see
The world from a whole different point
An' love my own

-Lil' Lazy LCRS

From The Beat: Why are you so alone at home, Lil' Lazy? Where is everybody? Has losing your friend who was killed while he was so young influenced you profoundly in any way to change your own life? You write that you have to hold your own. Do you have any family, homies, friends, who help you keep your life together on the outs? You seem to have a real affection for people, not just "your own," and that's a real strength. You're a terrific poet, with an original mind and sense of humor and honor. At the Ranch you get guys who often beef to talk, so that's all good.

A Letter

A sad thing that I own is my great-grandmother's letter she wrote to my mom. It's special because my great-grandmother used to be my best friend. So now I have it hung up on my wall. It's also special 'cause she's dead now, and dat's all I have to remember her by.

-Rhonda GU

From The Beat: What made your great grandmother your best friend, Rhonda? Did everyone love her as much as you did? When and how did she die? What did she write your mother in her letter?

Self-Explanatory

I mean I ain't tryna say that I'm Superman and all that bullshhhh, but a man nor woman couldn't walk a step in my shoes. What I have done and have experienced would make a blind man see. Self-explanatory.

-Chill Will B5

From The Beat: It may be self-explanatory, Willie, but we'd still like you to spell out some of the details that would make a blind man see. There are a lot of blind men in this society, and we applaud any effort that helps to let them see.

A Picture

The saddest thing I own is the last picture of me and my friends together on my birthday. We were all happy back then, had love for each other. Now things have changed and stuff ain't the same... It's sad how people turn.

-Maria GU

From The Beat: So what do you think changed, and why? Are the changes related to your case? Could this change be positive?

I Miss You So

I miss you so
I wish you was here
Holding me tight
And I wish I was there
Holding you tight
I get on my knees
Pray every night
Tears comin' out of my eyes
I wonder why
I always think of you
Holding me tight
I will always remember you...

-Yesenia GU

From The Beat: Tell us more about this person who means so much to you. Do you hope to be together when you get out? Is prison the only barrier to you two having a relationship, or are there others? What was it that you loved more than him that gave the system the power to take you from him?

A Letter That Makes Me Sad

The saddest thing I own... This boy I know was gay and everybody kept teasing him. And then when he told his parents he was gay they kicked him out. So the night he got kicked out he wrote me a letter telling me everything he was going through, and he had plans of moving to Atlanta to become a dance teacher. So every time I look at that letter it makes me sad.

-Princess GU

From The Beat: People can be very cruel about things that really should be none of their business. We'd be willing to be money that at least some of those kids who were teasing your friend had doubts about their own sexual preferences, and had to 'show' the world that they were not gay. Your friend's parents acted out of ignorance, which doesn't make it right, but which suggests that young people like you, who do not share the last generation's ignorance on this subject, have a job of educating to do. Have you heard from your friend since he left? How's he doing?

My Soul Had A Hole

The best summer I had
Was in 2005

Because I stayed gettin' high
Off them ecstasy pills
'Cause my soul had a hole
So I gotta get it filled

An' the best thing was them ecstasy pills
But now I'm gonna change the subject
'Cause I'm not in that no more

-Ngo LCRS

From The Beat: Now that you have time to really think about things, what do you think was causing the hole in your soul? Is it something you've done that you can't get over? Since you already know that ecstasy isn't going to help fill that hole, what do you think will? Can you talk to any of the counselors, or talk to us?

If You Were In My Shoes

Every morning I wake up either at my house or at my boyfriend's house. I get ready for school and my boyfriend takes me there. Then the whole day, I go to my classes, but sometimes I cut 4th period to have a earlier lunch.

After school I go to my locker to say bye to my friends and wait outside for my boyfriend. Sometimes I spend time with him before he goes to work when he doesn't have work. Then around six, when my boyfriend has work, either he drops me off at my house or at the 24-hour fitness gym. I stay at the gym for about 2-3 hours. Sometimes I meet my friend Tiffany there. Sometimes if I stay at the gym long enough until my boyfriend gets out of work. He either drives me home or I sleep over at his place.

The saddest thing that I own right now is my boyfriend's old ID card because I might not see him for a long time. I am afraid that if I stay here too long he won't want to wait for me anymore and leave me for someone else.

Every night I think about this as it replays through my head over and over again. I really miss him. Not just it's been three days without seeing him, but knowing I might not see him for a long time.

-Mary GU

From The Beat: We hope you get to see your boyfriend again, but we wonder how and why you would risk such a healthy-sounding relationship to do whatever you loved doing more than you love being with him. When you did whatever it was that gave the system power over your life, were you thinking of him? Why should he wait for you? If you get out, will you do something different so that he can count on your being there, or will you continue to put your freedom at risk? What are you doing to prepare yourself for a productive and decent life. Spending time with a loved one is important, but it's also key that you spend time doing things that make you feel good about yourself, and confident in your own abilities — and which are legal.

These Staff

Man, I'm tired of this place. These staff seem like they PMSin' every day. They bring their funky-ass attitudes to work. I can't wait to the 15th so I can get on.

Even though I'm going to Euclid (a group home), it's still better than this. At least we can express ourselves. The system is screwed up for real, 'cause I grew up in the Western Addition and I ain't used to people getting at me foul.

So everybody in YGC, I wish all y'all luck and I pray for y'all. Down.

-Champagne GU

From The Beat: As you know, the system is set up like this precisely so you WILL hate it, and then hopefully never come back. This is jail, after all. What's your plan, Champagne? You are a smart young woman, so what are you going to do to make sure this is your last time up in this place?

Immigrants

Well, well, well, well, Can you tell me why people hatin' on my immigrants? Maybe not, but I want to say that shhh all screwed up. It's not coo'. All they want is to be here so they can work and send money to their family... 'cause maybe over there where they live they have no money, you know.

All these government, people need to stop puttin' them in jail then sending them back to their country. So all you ninjas need to stop and be coo' and stop hating, OK? Love, yo' girl Shadow... but I'm really Jessica... Keep yo' heads up.

-Jessica GU

From The Beat: Thanks for expressing your views in the Beat, Jessica. We think you made some important points that people need to hear. Do you think people from other countries should be able to travel freely to the United States without any conditions or limitations? Do you think racism plays a part in people's reactions? If you were writing the country's immigration laws, what would they say?

On My Way

What it do, Beat? It's yo' boy, Neezy, and today I'm a write about how I'm a on my way back to the streets. Yeah, I'm 'bout to get out next month, ya dig? I been at this Ranch for near fifteen months and when I'm 'bout to get out, it will be fifteen months. When I get out, I'm a show love to homie, 'cause my ninjas is my family and I live for them.

-Neezy LCRS

From The Beat: You deserve your freedom, Neezy. You've earned it. You always show and write about the great love you have for homies, especially the little homies. Soon you'll be back in your neighborhood with them. You write that soon you'll be back in the streets—are you planning to hang there, hustle again? We hope you'll be a great example of how someone who used to hang in the streets can change his life and create a future, earning cash legally. You're a natural-born leader, so you know the young ones are going to listen to you, follow you. Where are you going to lead them?

Hate This Place

This place is real shady. They got us here wearin' other ninjas' draws, takin' showers wit' four other ninjas wit' some cold-ass water. Now that some foul shhh. Staff get paid to sit around on they ass and don't do stuff. We be eating this nasty-ass food three times a day, ain't gaining no kind of weight. I hate YGC on my mama.

-Young Reese B5

From The Beat: Well, you know Young Reese, this place wasn't designed so that you would like it. It was designed to make you hate it so much that you never want to come back. Did they succeed?

Where I'm From

Where I'm from you can't walk on the block unless you get a pass, and if you do, there is gonna be problems 'cause if one can't beat you the next one can.

Where I'm from you can't get at the big homies without one of the lil' hittas on your back. Where I'm from girls is messy. Where I'm from you don't wanna come there.

-Champagne GU

From The Beat: Is that all that's in your 'hood? Is there anything about your community that you like? Do you have plans to make it a better, safer place, or are you planning to leave the place you're from?

Summer At Camp

The best summer I ever had was when I was going to camp Mendocino. I had a great time there. I went swimming, did archery, horse back riding, and all other things. I really enjoyed myself while I was there.

When it was time to go and I was leaving the campsite, I really just got really mad and picked up a rock and threw it at a car and broke out a \$100 window and I cannot go back there no more.

-Lil' Nika GU

From The Beat: We just don't understand this, Rodrika. Did you throw that rock because something happened that made you mad, or just because you didn't want to leave? It's so sad that you found a place you loved, and your own actions made it so that you can't go back! Is this an example of how you take out your frustrations and anger? If so, we hope it's something you are working on, because you have all the evidence you need that going off on others this way only hurts yourself.

Thinkin' About You

Thinkin' about you
Man, I'm here in YGC

Goin' crazy and don't know what to do
I'm just thinking all about you

I remember that morning I went to
Yo' house at 5 a.m. just chillin' with you
And some homeboys, you talked to me

But also you know I have a man!
You asked me out but I said no...

We fell asleep but woke back up
You made the first move and I went along
But I was telling you no...

Is there feelings with me and you or what?
Hey, let me speak. To me

I see that the man I'm with seem more like a
brother

And you and me belong together...
Boy, what should I do? Should I be with you
Or stay with the one I'm with?

We'll see as soon as I get out this hell...

-Jessica GU

From The Beat: It sounds like you are in a real love triangle, Jessica. Have you ever thought about being without either one of your boys, and seeing what you can do on your own? When you get out, try to stay focused on the changes you need to make for yourself, regardless of which boy you choose (or no boy at all), so that you can stay out of jail.

Love

Love is peace
Like love on the streets
So keep the love on the streets

-Weather Man

From The Beat: Sweet poem, Weather Man. We hope your poem will inspire people in the streets to stop all the violence.

An Interview With Te Shawn

TBW: What's on your mind, Te Shawn?
 Te: Freedom!
 TBW: What's your life like on the outs when you're free?
 Te: Somethin' like a movie.
 TBW: What movie?
 Te: Like a never-ending movie. Like a diary.
 TBW: If we watched your movie or opened up your diary—where would it begin?
 Te: When I was born.
 TBW: Where were you born?
 Te: San Francisco.
 TBW: Tell us about your childhood.
 Te: It was gangsta.
 TBW: Tell us about your family.
 Te: I got a big family. Everybody in my family is high maintenance—like, high class. That's why everybody jealous, because we got flashy stuff.
 TBW: What kind of flashy stuff?
 Te: Everybody ridin' Lexuses and Benzes.
 TBW: Where did they get them?
 Te: Fresh off the boat. Everybody got a good-paying job.
 TBW: What kind of jobs?
 Te: Bus drivers, landscape, house real estate.
 TBW: Have you ever had a real job?
 Te: Yes.
 TBW: What kind of job?
 Te: I worked at an after-school program.
 TBW: What did you learn? What did you do?
 T: I was thirteen. I used to run workshops.
 TBW: What kind of workshop?
 T: At a place called GMC—Great Waterfront, Great Mission Consortium—it's called Waterfront.
 TBW: What did they teach you?
 T: How to run workshops, outreach. My second job, when I was ten, I was a newspaper boy.
 TBW: In your neighborhood?
 T: Yes. And then at age sixteen, I started working at the Boys and Girls' Club in the Mission. I was working there before I got locked up. I worked through MIEP—something through the government. I worked with little kids, from 4:30-5:30. I helped them with their homework. After 5:30, it was free time. I worked Monday, Tuesday and Friday, after school. I like working with kids.
 TBW: I bet you're good with them.
 T: Yep.
 TBW: What did you learn from working with kids?
 T: How to keep 'em happy. How to keep 'em smart.
 TBW: How do you keep the kids happy?
 T: You gotta have a funny side. You gotta know how to make jokes.
 TBW: Tell us a joke you tell the kids.
 T: What did the clown say to the elephant?
 TBW: OK, what did the clown say to the elephant? I give up!
 T: Get off me!
 TBW: Why was the elephant sitting on the clown?
 T: He was squishing him.
 TBW: And kids like this joke?
 T: Yes.
 TBW: How do you help the kids to be smart?
 T: Tell 'em to stay in school.
 TBW: Do they listen to you?
 T: Yeah. Encourage them to keep doin' their homework.
 TBW: Good. Where do you go to school?
 T: Phillip Burton. Up the hill on San Bruno and turn right.
 TBW: What grade are you in?
 T: Eleventh—supposed to be in twelfth.
 TBW: Why aren't you in twelfth grade?
 T: I didn't have enough credits.
 TBW: Because you got arrested?
 T: Yeah.
 TBW: So you're going back to school when you get out?
 T: Yeah.
 TBW: Whose life would you like to have your life like? What kind of profession would you like to have, when you get out?
 T: Bill Cosby, Johnny Cochran, Mac Dre, Tiger Woods, Usher.
 TBW: Is there anything else you'd like to say in your interview?
 T: That's all.
 TBW: Well, it sounds like you have faith that the educational system will teach you what you need to know to help you become whoever you want, to achieve whatever job or career you aim for, so that's all good. Good luck!
 T: Thanks!

-T LCRS

From The Beat: You have a good mind and heart, especially for the little kids, T. Any little homies would be lucky to have you teach them, to have you help them with their homework. We hope you stay in school and learn everything it has to teach you. Did you ever have a teacher in school who inspired and encouraged you, like you do when you help the young ones? We hope so. Then you know how much it can mean when your teacher pays listens to you, reads your work, guides you! You go!

When I See My Mom Cry

The saddest thing for me
 Is when I see my mom cry
 Because her pain
 You know
 When you love your mom
 You do everything for her
 I also love my jaina, Mitzy

-Slow Pain LCRS

From The Beat: It really hurts, when you see your mom's tears, to know that you're causing them, doesn't it, Slow Pain? When you're out again, will you remember how what you do affects your mom, and get the strength to stay out of any mess? That's the best way to show your mother you're genuinely sorry to cause her to fear for your safety and her sorrow. Some parents think it's their fault when their kids mess up. Does your mom blame herself for your being locked up? If so, how can you convince her it's on you, not her? And make it up to her when you're free again?



My Best Summer

One of the best summers I've had was about two summers ago. I spent it chillin' relaxing on the couch most of the days. But it felt good because that summer I had no problems, no worries, all I had to worry about was how many days I hadn't taken a shower.

Those were one of the good summers. I was younger back then and didn't trip about females so I didn't have drama hata. But it's all good even though I'm locked up. I know that my next summer will be better than this one.

-Tk B4

From The Beat: We like that forward looking ending. Right, your next summer will be better. You'll never again be without problems or worries (it comes with being an adult), but you can put the worry of lock-up behind you if that's what you want to do. Do you?

What Makes Me Sad

One thing make sad is when I see my mom sad 'cause I'm in juvenile hall. That's what make me sad because I don't like see my mom cry because of me. That's that pain I have because I love my mom and my family and they sad 'cause I'm in juvenile and I can't be home with them. My family is that only people I have always for me.

-Slow Pain B5

From The Beat: We can tell that you love your mom very much, and it is sad to think of her crying because you're locked up. Of course, you will get out of here one day, and then what will you do to show your mother just how much you love her? Will you find a way to stay home with her where you belong? That is the way to show her how much you love her.

A Mile In My Shoes

A mile in my shoes would take you to da place where you would see dumb thugs! Dumb thugs that you would not want to meet. Ninjas that a sweet talk you to sweep you off yo' feet, just keep walkin' and don't say a word and it a be like dem ninjas was never heard!

The smell of the sidewalk would run you away, but da cute-ass ninjas make you wanna stay. You could walk to my block to get off some rocks, then run for yo' life 'cause here come the cops.

-Sade GU

From the Beat: Is this all, or would we see grandmothers and babies and families too? Tell us more about your community, Sade. Oh, and we have to note that running from the cops isn't a very effective strategy for future success, 'cause here you are!

Walkin' A Mile In My Shoes

You'll walk the backs of the Mission to the fronts and see all the homies from everywhere. You'll run through the 'hood to help the homies chasing out the enemies, patrolling the 'hood from dust till dawn till your feet hurt. You'll walk miles a day. You'll be in it to win it. Walkin' in my shoes the fresh air would hit you as you walk around the streets of the Mission.

-Travieso B2

From The Beat: So, are you "in it to win it"? And if so, are you winning it? From where we sit, you look like just another young man doing what you're told to do by a bunch of strangers. Is that what you call winning? What else would we be seeing in your 'hood? Will we see the tears of the family members grieving over their lost loved ones? Will we see young men like you on their way to the halls, to the Y, to jail, to prison? See, we think we're in it to win, too — which is why you won't find us living like slaves in jail.

Looking Out The Window

What do you see when you look out the window, life or death? How is it that you messed up so many times? For the people that get locked up, how do you do this shhh so many times? Do you like this that you come back so many times? Do you like this bullshh? But on real, keep you' head up.

-Fat Rat B2

From The Beat: Are these just questions in the air, with no meaning, Fat Rat, or are you really interested in the answers? How many times have you been locked up? If the answer is more than once, then these are questions you can ask yourself. As for your advice to "forget" the judge, we don't think it shows the maturity you're going to need to stay out of here. You say "forget the judge," but one thing for sure: The judge ain't gonna forget you!

A Step Away From Death

As I take the millionth step, I finally realized what's up ahead
I finally take a stop and I'm stuck in YGC sittin' on a fake-ass bed
What I realized is that I'm doin' stupid shhh to end up at the same spot
I always had that street mentality, not caring if I get shot
I been through a lot of shhh for a youngsta runnin' through people's cribs,
Posted on the corner of a street waitin' to stack a phat lik,
Jus' followin' the life of a thug to have a whole clip through ya chest
The life I finally realized I was going through was a step away from death

-Young Beast B4

From The Beat: You got that right — it's either a step away from death or step from being behind walls the rest of your life, filled with "if only..." and "I wish..." The great thing about your piece, Young Beast, is that you have taken this moment to reflect on your life, and you're not satisfied with the reflection. So, it's in your hands to change the picture. Take a step away from here and towards school, family, work and responsibility. Go for it!

No Love Like Mom's

My momma is the best mother that I ever have!
She's there for me when I'm in need and she supports me even when I'm locked up at Hillcrest and YGC. No one can be more supportive then my mom.

I tell you she is everything to me, and the day that I get rich and famous I'ma give my mother everything she needs! I wish I can give her everything she wants but I know all she wants is for my twin and I to be down with school. I will do that for her and for me. There's no love like my mothers love. True.

-Ying Yang B2

From The Beat: You are right, Tommy, what she wants from you is not riches and expensive gifts, she wants you and your twin to do well in school so that you can prepare yourselves for a decent life in freedom. If you give her that, you will truly be showing your love.

Stupid Things For Money

If I didn't have to worry about money, I would feel a lot better because I always do stupid things for money. I think if Cito didn't have to worry about money I wouldn't be here right now. But if I don't have to worry about money I don't know what to worry about. If I didn't have to worry about having money I would do things that I can't normally do without money. Which is everything.

-Cito B4

From The Beat: If you had money things probably would be better, but than again, you will never know. People with money still have other worries to occupy them, like their families, their health, their jobs, etc.

Mad Being At YGC

Me being at YGC
Is something new to me
It's not very fun, it's boring if you was here to see
You wouldn't want to be here
You would wish you were at home
You would wish you could make that one phone call
To someone you love to let them know you're all right

-Lil' Nika GU

From The Beat: We gather that this is your first time at YGC. Can we also count on it being your last time at YGC? Is your experience different from what you thought it would be? What are you going to do (or not do) to make sure this is your only experience here?

'Bout To Get Out

'Bout to get outta here and do me again. You no everybody love ya boy, so I'ma jus take in all the love and get money!

J-B B4

From The Beat: All money is not good money just as all love is not real love. Be sure not to "do yourself" in the worst way by being fooled by those who say they love you. If anything, love yourself first and real love and real money will find you when you least expect it. If you go back to doing what brought you here already, then we'll expect to see you again.

Message To My People

Have you ever wondered why God gave you two ears and only one mouth? Message to my people: conversation is lethal an' pillow talkin' ain't the code. But you know how that goes. You meet a bad female and now you lovin' her. Some words get exchanged, ya brain get rearranged this got me going back to the same dawn thang: Have you ever wondered why God gave you two ears an' only one mouth?

Collar that man an' you'll find some shhh out. Yo' ears stay open, yo' mouth can close. You open it at that wrong time, that's the route you chose, no matter how the game goes y'all breakin' the code, and that why I never ever trust a soul.

-Lil'-Grinda B4

From The Beat: We're not sure what message you're trying to convey. Are you saying that when in doubt, keep your mouth shut? We can live with that.

Dear Momma

I love you and I miss you. I'm sorry for all the pain that I cause your mind and heart. It seems that everything I've done has torn us apart. You always tried to help. I should have listened to what you say. I bet that if I did I wouldn't be lying in a Juvie bed. I pray you can forgive me, but I hope you know of the love you know I have for you.

Much love and respect.

-Angel GU

From The Beat: Telling your mother that you love her is very important, and something she will want to hear. But showing her that love is far more important. What can you do, once you leave juvie and are reunited with your mother again, to show her that love? Will you start listening to her advice? Or will you allow the system to take you from her again because of a lifestyle that you love more than her?

Ain't That Something?

If I had some real friends and real family I wouldn't think that I would be the way I am, but that is just a dream I have, just like the dreams I have about me lifeless in the streets

-Smacks B4

From The Beat: We have dreams too, and one of our dreams is that you write more than one sentence! When you say you wouldn't be the way you are if had real friends and real family, what do you mean? What way are you? Is the way you are helpful to your life or not? If not (and we can't believe the answer could be anything else, since you're locked up), then you have to look past your friends and family and look deep within yourself, and choose what you want out of life.

It don't feel good being incarcerated

I'm like an animal ready to be free
But my name is Lil' Cricket
I come straight from the 'hood
Where everything goes down
I stay banging

But lets get to reality.

I'm just waiting for a long time

'Cause time is the only answer

You feel me? Was up to all the homies and my brother out there

I'm going straight to a group home

For a year, but I gotta do my time

Because a criminal gotta serve his time

But I'll catch you later Beat with respect. Your homeboy

-Lil Cricket B2

From The Beat: We took out the line, "Can't stop won't stop" because we're tired of reading it, and because it is such an obvious lie. No one "can't" stop unless they're dead, and you are not dead. If you won't stop, then you've chosen to be in this place, and you're choosing to be in far more oppressive places that are waiting for you down the line. You like doing what you do, and the system likes doing what it does. So get used to it, the two of you will be close, close acquaintances over time. Like you said, "a criminal gotta serve his time." Again and again and again...

Stay Out

I wish that I never got locked up because this is a bunch of bull. When you get locked up at YGC there are only a couple of things you can do. But on some real stuff I hope you do not get locked up. Stay the hell out.

-Spoon B2

From The Beat: You give good advice, but why didn't you take your own advice? If you wish you never got locked up, do you also wish you never did what led to your being locked up? There is a cause and effect here, and unless you put those two things together, you may be experiencing lock up again.

I'd Worry About Manhood

If I didn't have money to worry about I would worry about manhood. I'll make sure that all the homies are getting their money. If not I'll give them the money to cop on something that they can make money outta. I'll give money to moms so she can buy whatever she wants, whenever she wants, so she won't eva have to worry about money.

-Tha Kinn B2

From The Beat: Your first line gave us some hope that you would write about the interesting subject of manhood. But you put the promise out there without ever meeting it. When you say you would worry about manhood if you didn't have to worry about money, what exactly do you mean? What does manhood mean to you, and what are your worries about it?

Name For Girls, Name For Boys

I like my name Fat Thug because the girls love my name. I got four names: Fat Thug for the girls an' Fat Slug for them boys. Holler at yo' boy.

-Fat Thug B5

From The Beat: We don't get this, Fat Thug. You write that you have four names, but you only give us two of them. What are the other two?

Locked Up 420 Days

My name Fat Thug. I'm still locked up in YGC. My summer was locked up in YGC. I been locked up for 420 days.

-Fat Thug B5

From The Beat: That's a long time to be locked up, Fat Thug. How will you act when you get out of here so this is the last time you're locked up?

My Momma

My momma plays a big part in my life. I really want to thank her for bringing me into this world. I love my mom to death. My mom always tells me right from wrong. I wish I would've listened to my mom when she told me not to go outside because now I'm in here wishing I would've listened. My mom has always been there for me. I'm thankful for the mom that I have.

-L B2

From The Beat: How do you show your mom how much you love her? Telling her you love her is important, and we know she likes hearing it. But we think what she would like the most would be for you to find a way not to let yourself be taken from her in the future and put into a box. Can you find a way to stay home and not end up back in the system? That would be a gift that would just keep on giving!

Worry

Man, put it like this. It ain't like I just worry about money. But you know me, Man. I like to get that dip, ya heard. But if I ain't go' worry about money, I just got to worry about the police or them haters out to get me. But you know ya boy.

-Lil' Ant B2

From The Beat: We're not sure you're clear on the concept... if you didn't have to worry about money, what would the police and the haters be after you for? Can you think of your life free from money worries, and therefore free from illegal activities and the entire system? What would your life be about then?



Respect Our Women

I love my girls.

They worth way more than diamonds and pearls.
Their beauty and charm and lovely eyes
Them flexible curves and thick thighs
I hold yo' hand and kiss yo' lips
I hold you tight and caress your yo' body
Love is to be shared between a man and a woman
We should love, respect and cherish our women
And for nothing in the world give 'em up
But if she get outta line... I still love y'all

-EP Clappa B4

From The Beat: Even though we know the R-rated part of this rap was a joke, we still had to take it out. Some people might take it seriously... You're right, love is a special thing, and yes, women are beautiful in every way. Which is why you should treat your girl like you would like a boy to treat your baby girl if you had one. What goes around comes around.

Message To My People

The message to my people is that freedom is not your free will

And when the law is broken you are the surrounded by dirt and filth

The system is made for cons — to fail
I know it's easy to make money in the fast lane
But the consequences is going back to jail
Sometimes life is twisted into a tornado of shame.

The streets is addictive especially in the game
I think to myself that I could rise up to fame
But the life of the streets will also leave

Yo' face ripped off of yah frame.

-Young Beast B4

From The Beat: You have a good way of reasoning. 'Hood fame is not worth getting your face ripped off your frame by anyone. But if the life of the streets is not for you, then where do you see your life moving in the next few years?

My Life

I'm in it to win it. Every time I hit the streets always watching out for the police and narco's, watching out for the enemy while I paper chase. Always staying alert tryin' not to get caught slipping. Watching females walk by but there ain't no time for that when I'm out there. I only have money on my mind and a pocket full of dreams.

-Travieso B2

From The Beat: We always find it interesting that boys who have already lost their freedom still write about doing the same as before without risking the same consequences. Are you walking through life with your eyes closed? Look around at where you are, and realize — before it's too late — that this is a baby taste of what lies ahead if you don't make some major changes. On the other hand, if you like being told what to do 24/7, then just keep hitting those streets!

Moms

There's only one person in my life I could really say I love without regretting it. She's always there when I need her, and never hesitates to help me in any way she can. Always comes to me straight, never with bull. She never lies to me. She says there no need for that. "There's no bones in my closet," that's what she would say. The number one woman in my life. I love you mom.

-Travieso B2

From The Beat: We can feel the deep love you have for your mom in this piece, Travieso. She has sacrificed for you, never lied to you, and always been there for you. So what do you owe her? How can you repay her? Which do you think she would rather have from you, expensive gifts of cars or jewelry, or you, safely at home with her? It seems to us that that's a gift that's in your power to give her, but then it will be your turn to sacrifice for her.

A Better Life

If life was that way when I or people didn't have to worry about money the community would be safer. I would just worry about my mother, my baby momma and baby. Just a better life over all.

-Eric B2

From The Beat: Well, we hope you find a way to get to that better life over all. Of course, there will always be worries about money (for everyone), but if you can find a way to pay your way through life without risking your life (or freedom), that also would give you a better life over all.

I Knew

I like this life. It's very exciting, like when everybody gets up and starts fighting. It's not that I can't stop, it's that I don't want to stop. This is always how I thought I would be and I somewhat knew I was gonna come to YGC. I knew that one day this was gonna be me.

-Pinguino B2

From The Beat: Well, if you knew that what you were doing would lead you here, and you did it anyway, we guess you wanted to come here. You like it?

Mitzy

Mitzy, you're driving me insane. Not seeing you is causing me pain. I miss you so much mija. I miss all the moments we used to share. Not knowing when I am going to see you again. Te amo Mija.

-Slow Pain B5

From The Beat: We took out the other piece you wrote about banging on the streets... As for your love for Mitzy, were you thinking about how much you loved her when you did whatever it was that led you away from her and to here? Is love demonstrated in words or in action? When you get out of here, will you sacrifice the behavior that leads you to the hall in order to be able to be with Mitzy? That is the true test of your love.

I Stopped

Whets on my mind today is my girl Melissa because it made me feel really good that she wrote me a letter and told me how she really feels. All I want to say if I could talk to her right now is I love you too baby, and I did stop doing all those things for you and for myself.

-Cito B4

From The Beat: We're curious about something, Cito. When you say you stopped doing "all those things," did you stop before you got here or after? If you stopped after you got here, that's not so impressive since you have to stop doing all those things when you're locked up. The only question that matters is what you plan to stop doing when you get out of here.

How I feel

I basically just miss being home outside these walls. I miss my family and my girl most of all because those are the people who I truly love. When I get out I want to change and not do the thing that I used to do.

-Ronald B4

From The Beat: You have a legit reason to be feeling the way that you're feeling. You should bein' here with your family in your own bed. There is no reason why you should put at risk the things that make your life worth living: being with your family, your girl and sleeping in your own bed. You will get your chance to make the right decisions this time around. Don't blow it!

To All The People

The people reading this should try this: stop sayin' the word nigga and stop the killing.

-GBB B2

From The Beat: We wish everyone would follow this simple but important advice. We're a little surprised, though, because it seems that everyone uses that word that we were taught was a word of hate. Why don't you like it? Do you ever use it yourself?

Girls

These "girls" in here are all about drama
Smilin' at you one second, then callin' out "Your Mama"
I'm done with crushes and trying to give them respect
I'm just going to ignore them and see what happens next
If they hate me, fine; if they don't, oh, well
I don't want any part of any of their hells
All that is, is shhh I don't need
I don't need girls to beg and plead
Out of all the girls here, only one is sincere
And that's 'cause she's been in and out for a year
She knows the real me and doesn't listen to rumors
I need all the rest like a fatal malignant tumor
Well, that's all for my whiney poem
Move on to the next one, 'cause baby, I'm gone

-Dominic

From The Beat: Without getting into anybody's drama, can you just enjoy the guys and girls up in juvy with you, Dominic? Just remember, many of their lives can be terrifically horrific at home, and they are trying to deal with their own realities. Much of how they react to you may have more to do with the traumas going on in their heads as it does about you. So can you keep your kind heart, your humor, and just try to understand what they may be going through? Maybe you being patient and strong will lend them some strength, peace of mind and courage to go on.

I'll Show Them

I miss so many things from home!
Most of all I miss my family.
I feel almost as if I could have spent more time with them
and treated them better.
Now that I'm here, I'm stuck with my thoughts
about everything bad that I've said and done to them.
I've said "sorry" a million times,
but when I get out, I guess I'll just have to show them.

-Tanya

From The Beat: That's right, action speaks louder than words

I hate home

I hate where I stay

I hate that I have to live there every day

My Shoes

If you were in my shoes, you'd be dead. One mile isn't
shhh—you'd have to be me to know what I'm about. I'm not
worrying about anyone walking in my shoes any time soon.
I'm in juvenile hall—my story isn't exciting. The only thing
you should know is life's a witch! POW!

-Prisoners of War!

From The Beat: Why is death, as you write, so near to your life, Prisoner of War? Whether or not your life is dull and/or dangerous, why don't you write about what your daily life is like specifically? How is your personal life a witch? Lastly, what makes you a POW?

A Day In My Shoes

Every day is the same. On the outs, if you walked a mile in my shoes, you would wake up in my room. Take a shower, shave if needed, eat food and brush my teeth, not in that order. Leave and walk to where all of my homeboys kick it, which was about a mile and a half. When I get there, talk and do stuff fun. Keepin' friends' rides, go places, take care of stuff, go to parties. Get a ride to my house and repeat it all over again.

-Irresponsible Homie

From The Beat: Nice life! No school! No homework! No job! No making your bed, errands to run for your mother, no laundry to do, no cleaning the house. Have you quit school? How do you earn the money you need for shoes, a toothbrush, etc? If no one, like your parents, needs you to take any responsibility for yourself, your home, some cash, do you ever take the initiative and enroll in school, get a job, yourself?

A Mile In My Shoes

If you walked in my shoes for some days, you would be deep in Vallejo, where I'm from. On Fridays, you would go to parties in wit' my boys. You would see gunplay, most likely, and hear gunshots. When the party is over, you would conduct yourselves like normal human beings. At night you'd smell my grandmother's cooking and you wouldn't run, you would walk.

-Yung Papamaker

From The Beat: Why are their gunshots where you hang, Yung Papamaker? How do you deal with the danger? You'd let us smell your grandmother's cooking? We want to eat it! What does she make that is your favorite food? Do you like your life the way it is? Or would you change it if you could? If so, how would you create it to be different? We suggest you start by staying away from the violence.

I'm Feelin' Myself

I'm savagin' and damagin'
Off the thizz
This is what it is, miss
I'm seein' stuff in slow motion
It's sort of like the ocean
I'm getting holes in my brain
Wit' all this pain
And this my game

-Elmo

From The Beat: Time to put this game away before it further destroys you. You know the damage it has done and it will only get worse. The time is now to rise up and start a new chapter in your life!

My Black And Mild

The way I snatch off the plastic
And break it
My flame is already in my hand
How happy I am to spark it
Put the beige tip to my lips
And put the flame on the tip
The smokes make me melt
When it hits my lip
I inhale, then exhale
Then do the same again
Won't be long
Until the next black begin
Pass me the blackage
Matter a fact, pass me the whole package
Bring me to my heavenly passage

-Fresh

From The Beat: Nice little poem, but what's the point of smoking and smoking and smoking? Well, we suppose you will smoke until you fail probation and then you come back to this joint. Your pleasures need to be put on hold if you are to succeed in getting out of the system.

Time Is Flying

Time's ticking...
Tic toc, tic toc
Don't look at your watch
It's life's colors
My time is running out
Y'all should know
What I'm talking about
I'm sinking like Titanic
But I'm keepin' above water
No need to panic
I'm still flyin' like an eagle
Flyin' higher than an average seagull
Come fly wit' me
And run off wit' me
We will be free!

-Fresh

From The Beat: Not sure what the message here is. One minute you are talking about time moving forward, then you speak of sinking, yet you are flying high?? Tell us more about this poem.

Walk In My Shoes

If you walked in my shoes
You see the bottom of my Bos
Walking around Novato
And San Francisco
When you hear the police
They be on the go
If you walked in my shoes
You see some fine beezies
Because your boy
Always lookin' grimy and greasy
So if you walk in my shoes
That what you'll see
That's a day in the life of your boy
Lil' E

-Lil' E

From The Beat: How do the girls like you lookin' grimy and greasy, Lil' E? Do you talk to them? Go to school with them? Work at a job with them? Do the police stop you, hassle you, because of the way you look? Tell us more about a day in your life walkin' around in your Bos!

Stop Frontin'

This Young Country from Richmond, locked up in Marin doin' my thang, but on some real shhh, I get tired of ninjas talk about what they do on the outs, sayin' my block roll, sayin' they get money. I just sit back an' look at them. I say, "A real hustler don't talk about what they do, " so ninjas be talkin' like they be dipped in butter on the outs, but come in' the hall, lookin' like a bomb. I tell ninjas to keep it real, 'cause I'm goin' to keep it real all day. I just say I know what I do on my block.

I'll be out soon, so you goin' see me in Richmond fitted from head to toe, get me? This yo' boy', Young Country.

-Young Country

From The Beat: You sound to us like you too are frontin'. No need to say squat, that's for sure. Every single person in the hall has made some poor choices that's why they are there. Leave your stories at the door, 'cause the time is now to figure out a better way to live, and hanging out in Richmond fitted sounds great, but what's the plan to succeed? You have one? Or are you simply going back to your old ways?

Home

I hate home
I hate where I stay
I hate that I have to live there every day
All me and mom do is argue with each other
I can't believe she's really my mother
I wish it was different
It might seem mean
It was
I wish I wake up
It will all be a dream
She hates that I run the streets
And do drugs, get perked
To her that's all I love
There's no more time
Next time I'll
Finish this rhyme

-Lil' E

From The Beat: We sense a major breakdown between you and your mom. You know the problem, yet you prefer not to hear it. You know it's wrong the lifestyle that brings you here, yet no one can change you except you. We hope you address the problem before it further ruins you and your relationship with mom. In your ideal world what would that be like? No one sweating you?

First Time Locked Up

It was scary
Hard being without my family
I miss my baby brother
I wish I could stay out late
Like I used to
I wish I could go back in time
And not did what I did
I want to drive again
This should be my last time here
My first time locked up

-Carmen

From The Beat: It's all on you. Can't go back in time, you must move forward with a plan.

A Trip To Ireland

The best summer I had was when I went to Ireland. I went there when I was a young teen. My friend and I were in the Army for the summer. It was a cool summer, because I learned a lot of things, like new fighting techniques, and really enjoyed the exercise. Throughout the whole experience, it was cool. I plan to do it soon, but my friend got locked up, so I don't know when that will be.

-Lil' Joker

From The Beat: How were you and you friend in the army when you were young teens? Do you mean that you plan to go back to Ireland this summer for army exercises? If your friend is locked up, and you're free, can you go to Ireland with another friend or by yourself? Sounds good!

The Miss

When I'm away from home
I feel like I'm alone
My baby boo is hard to reach
And my moms only visits once a week
It feels like I'm getting weak
I miss that kiss
My mom gives me on my cheek
It feels like I could hardly
Stand on my feet
But it's all good
I'm gonna be out soon
I'll be right back
With my baby boo

-Mac

From The Beat: Home sick is what you have. There is nothing all good about this experience, unless you are determined to better your life. What's your plan?

My Jordans

If you walked in my shoes, you would be with my home girl, Maria. We always together with only, like, \$20 each. You would go to the mall and to parties. You would meet so many guys, more than girls. You would smell my mom's gumbo. You would be on a bus or be in a Benz. Yea, that's how we do it--big. You be all over the world.

-Carmen

From The Beat: \$20 to spend each time you go to the mall is a lot of money, don't you think, Carmen? How do you earn it or who gives it to you? Can we also taste your mom's gumbo, and the rest of her home cooking? Who's Benz would we be riding in, if we were in your Jordans? Where in the world have you been, that we could go to too?

Home

I miss my home and family a lot. I'm going to be home pretty soon, April 30th. Free as a bird. I hope not to commit any other crimes, because then I'm going to placement. I don't want to go to placement—that will suck a lot. So I'm going to try my hardest this time.

-Joey

From The Beat: Try? Try? You have to do more than try your hardest, you have to want freedom. You have to stay focus! No time to chill. What's your plan? Who can you lean on when things get rough? What will you do if you happen to fall back to your old ways?

FIFA World Cup

Yeah, I am going to write to you about the World Cup in Germany. All I know is Mexico is going to win the World Cup, ok?

-Santiago

From The Beat: OK. Don't you wish you were on Mexico's soccer team, Santiago? Or even the US team? What would it take for you to qualify? What strategy to win would you initiate in your team? You always write about how much you love to play soccer, so do not forget to tell us the next time you play, we'll be there!

WALDEN HOUSE PSK

Why I Feel This Way

Why do I even feel this way
I wonder if you even care
I just wanted to let you know
What I come to bear
I don't know why I'm writing you this
But it's always worth a shot
That in this life I care for you a hell of a lot
I think of you night and day
Since the first time we set eyes
Thinking of the passing days
We have spent both our lives
I'm not trying to ask you back
So please keep reading this
You taught me what life's about
So just remember that I'll love you forever
Till the end.

-Kali

From The Beat: We don't know what went down between you and the person you're writing to, but we do know that love is conflict. It carries us to the mountaintops, then puts us down a hole! We're curious what you mean when you say this person taught you what life's about. What is it about? How will what you've learned about life change anything about how you live it?

In My Home Shoes

Before I got here
I was using drugs
Being with some I didn't want to be with
Try to leave him
But it didn't work
Times I try to settle down
And with someone else
Behind your back
Try to run away from you
'Cause you were hitting me
For no reason
Try to get the hell
Away from you
Thank God I did
I'm here at PSK

-Tejanitas

From The Beat: We're glad you finally got away from this abusive man, LT, but we still wonder why you would ever let a man beat on you. In fact, you say he hit you for no reason, but we can't imagine any reason that would justify hitting a woman. The only "men" who do that aren't men at all, but still little boys who only know how to exercise control through force and power. We hope you recognize your own force and power to say "No" both to the temptations that have led you here and to the abuse that you have finally escaped.

Memories: The Saddest Thing I Own

Every day I wake up with my memories and thoughts. I go on with my day with my memories and thoughts. When I close my eyes I have my memories and thoughts. When I'm 6 feet under, I will have my memories and thoughts. Everywhere I go, whatever I do, I'm haunted with thoughts. Momma I miss you.

-Brittany

From The Beat: It is true that we can be haunted — even tortured — by our memories and thoughts. But at the same time, we can also be comforted and even overjoyed by different memories and different thoughts. So we don't want to endorse the "6 feet under" solution, because we can't agree with you that you'll still have your memories and thoughts then. Life is a gift, even though it comes with pain. Treasure it.

The Saddest Thing I Own

Well w'at up Beat? It's Melissa from San Jose up in here at the PSK. The saddest thing I had was a teddy bear that was my best friend's. She passed away two years ago in a car accident. Her homeboy was driving drunk. She was high, and out of nowhere the car lost control. I guess she was trying to protect her sister. So my girl Ashley flew out of the car window. And by the time she got to the hospital she died two hours later in my arms. Well, that's all I got of you. Later... use 'em.

-Melissa

From The Beat: We're so sorry about your best friend, Melissa. The worst thing about alcohol is that once you're under its influence, you believe you can do things as well or better than when you were sober because the first thing that is affected is your ability to reason and think clearly. Did this tragedy make you think (or act) any differently with relation to drinking in general, and drinking and driving in particular? Where do you keep her teddy bear? When you look at it, do you see her?

Those Were The Days

So my best summer I ever had was last summer. I went swimming every day, got hella high on crank, crystal, weed whatever. Not like most tweekers, I ate all the time. So we were out at Jack In The Box or Carls Jr always. I had so much dope and weed and money all the time. And I would have my homeboys take me to the mall and buy me bathing suits, and if we weren't at my house we got a motel and kicked it in the hot tub.

-Merrily

From The Beat: Well, it sounds like you were living it up, all right. But then, look where it led to. We hope you've learned what you need to learn so that when you go home you'll be able to get your summer fun in other ways that don't risk your freedom!

Sad Memories

See, I have had a lot of sad things happen to me. See, a lot of sad thing I have is memories. Like the memory I have of being taken away from my mom. I was looking out the back window with tears falling down my eye. I could see my mom running after me. My brother cried for the first time. I cried while banging on the window trying to get out.

But now me and my mom don't talk any more. I haven't talked to her for eight months. But that was only one sad memory. I have to go through things that I went through to be as strong as I'm now.

-B-Eyes

From The Beat: Your description of being taken away from your mom is frightening and disturbing. Why were you taken from her? How long were you away, and where did you go? Why haven't you spoken to your mom in such a long time? What is she going through?

Favorite Food

My favorite food is anything my grandma cooks because she be puttin' everything you can think of in there. It be hecka good. I eat fried chicken, French fries, pie, cakes and everything else. I eat candy, fish, beans, gumbo and tacos. I know most people don't have money or are in jail and can't get these things. That's why I'm so thankful for all my food every time I eat.

-Miss EPA

From The Beat: Ohhh, you made us so hungry! It's good to be thankful for the food we eat — and especially when we eat such good food, the kind your grandma cooks! Are you afraid of getting fat? (If you are, you can bring some of that delicious food to us, and we'll get fat instead of you!)

Super Size

My favorite food is all you can eat. It's just like saying super size from eating too much McDonald's. These days I eat so much I just feel like throwing up. But one of the things that is my favorite food is pizza, Big Macs, double cheeseburgers, pig, goat and fish. But my favorite is goat because you take off the skin and the guts it gots, then you make it to pieces so you can cook it. So just super size me.

-Weasel

From The Beat: Hmmm, all you can eat goat... what a combination! When you're eating things that are as appealing as what you listed above, do you eat slow and savor every bite? Or do you enjoy these foods so much that you just dig in without a care in the world? Do you lick your fingers as you go?

Favorites

My favorite food is pizza and tacos and chicken. Because my mom used to make some chicken when I was little. Also she used to make me some tacos with sauce inside there.

-Guadalupe

From The Beat: It all sounds delicious, Lupe. How do you like your chicken? Fried? Baked? Boiled? We have to go now... you're making us very hungry.

Don't Trip

Don't trip. I got yo' back. I'ma hold you down. I know it's fake people out here sayin' I love you, I'm going to wait. But when you gone they go to the next ninja. Dat ain't cool. But don't trip. I love you! I will always be here. Peace and love that's what it is. That's what it's going to be. Peace and love. Just come back to the people that got yo' back.

-Miss EPA

From The Beat: We don't want to be too critical, Ms., but we hope you put as much attention on the things that are going to help you in life — mainly, your schooling — than on relationships that are here today but gone tomorrow.

Chinese Food

My favorite food would be Chinese food. I love Chinese food. I love chow mein and lemon chicken. But what I love the most is sweet and sour pork. It's good. You would love it if you tried it. I also love Mexican food. My favorite would be meat with squared potato. Man! That stuff is good. Man, and I also love fast food like Jack-in-the-Box, MacDonalds, In 'n' Out Burger and Burger King.

Meat With Potato
Buy smashed meat
Cook it for 1/2 hour
Cut potatoes into squares
Cut onions
Cut jalapenos
Add potatoes
Cook for 10-15 minutes
It is goood.

-No Name

From The Beat: Thank you for the recipe, but since you didn't put your name on it, we can't ask you to make it for us! We'll have to cook it ourselves to see if it's a good one or not. Do you think you'll ever have to watch what you eat in your lifetime? We're told that the older you get, the harder it is for your body to process certain foods (and we're told that by older people who know!) With your eating habits now, does this worry you?

EPA Teacher's Corner:

From The Beat: When we first read this amazing piece, we thought it was written by an 8th grader, and we were blown away! When we learned it was written by the 8th grade teacher, we were still blown away! It's a beautifully written, deeply thought out, and very important piece. We hope the young men and women in your class are not too young to be serious, not too young to recognize what's truly important in their lives. You have reminded us and them that you can be serious and profound while still having fun and being positive. We admire this piece so much. Thank you for writing it. We hope your students know just how much they can learn from you...

Serious

Dear Beat Within: Serious is the topic of my paper. Some people take nothing serious. Life is a joke to them. They have been misled and misguided to think that nothing in life is that serious and take things with a grain of salt. However, when you go through life like that you tend to hurt people's feelings. You are considered selfish, mean, inconsiderate and rude.

Some things that make people really sad, such as a death or someone not getting into the college they wanted, people who don't take it serious could say some pretty hurtful things. People who don't take schoolwork seriously obviously never get good grades. People who don't take love seriously never get to feel the warmth of real love. No matter how much someone loves them, they don't take it seriously so they end up losing that person forever. The sad thing is that for most people when they finally get to the point where they feel something needs to be taken seriously it's too late. Either they are in jail or have missed some very big opportunities that would have made them have a happy, comfortable, long lasting life.

In addition, when a person doesn't take things seriously they stop learning. Learning is a life-long experience. Even the oldest, smartest person learns something new every day. When you stop learning you have entrapped yourself into a small box worse than any prison known, the box of ignorance, not knowing and stupidity, not wanting to know. By the time the darkness gets a little light, you have to start over from ground zero. I'm not saying that it is impossible, just hard to start from rock bottom in your thirties or forties.

If I can give anybody a piece of advice, it would be to stay focused, get serious, when things are funny laugh, and when things hurt cry, but know that after the laughing and crying life is still going on with or without you. So make a good impression, stay positive and productive and enjoy what life has in store for you. God has a purpose for everyone's life. Let Him use you how He wants and with Him. Keep it serious. Peace and love to you all. Stay up.

-LSP

Go Food, Go, Go, Go Food!

OMG Food! I can go on about it. I mean I'm skinny but my three best friends are always like, "Hey Wizzy, you a four stacks?" I love pizza. In case you don't know, a four-stacker is four sandwiches stacked on each other.

My brother took a picture of me eating it and I was hella laughing. I showed my best friends and they're like, "Damn, Wizzy, you hecka hungry!"

It's hella funny, but hey, it's an all-you-can-eat buffet.

-Wizzy

From The Beat: We feel you... At an all-you-can-eat buffet, you better get your money's worth or else you might as well go to a regular restaurant, right? Four sandwiches stacked on each other is a whole lot. That sounds like Dagwood in the comic strips. What else have you eaten that was as amazing as that? And how do you stay skinny?

Rice And Beans

My favorite food... rice and beans. I love that food. It reminds me of my dad because I remember he would always come from work and say I want rice and beans. Now I say that too. I really love that food with cheese and jalapenos. It's the best food for me ever. The smell of the rice and the beans reminds me of my dad. I love rice and beans like I love my dad.

-Gomez

From The Beat: Isn't it interesting when certain smells remind us of earlier times or people we know? We love when people appreciate the simplest things. It's so sweet that you want rice and beans because of the memory of your father rather than wanting lobster tails and steak for other reasons. What other foods did your father like? Can you cook rice and beans? If not, would you like to learn?

When you stop learning you have entrapped yourself into a small box worse than any prison known, the box of ignorance, not knowing and stupidity, not wanting to know.

The One And Only

Okay, so it's dis boy dat I like. I mean I ain't all up on him or nothin' but he a coo' type boy. I like him because he got respect for women and he ain't like an everyday ninja. I mean, yeah, he got dreads and a grill, but that don't change his personality. He is hecka nice.

But the problem is that he be flirtin' wit' a lot of other females. And I don't want to get in a relationship wit' him because he probably would cheat. Man, I hate cheaters! But anyways I still talk to him, but we only friends. Also, he got dis one thing where one day he be talkin' to you and another day he act like he don't know you. So I think I have let y'all know enough about ma crush. Until then I'ma get ghost.

-Bay Chick

From The Beat: You know, at your age (and his), we think it's fine for him to be flirting with a lot of girls — and not so fine for you or him to settle on one person and then judge that person for "cheating." We think that you should have lots of different boyfriends, and he should have lots of different girlfriends — and both of you should have a greater respect for what is truly important in your lives at the moment, and that is getting a good education. We understand why, at your age, love is so important to you, but we can promise you from the vantage point of age and experience that you will have many, many crushes — and you should — and he will have many, many crushes — and he should. In the meantime, study hard..

I Take Life Seriously

What I take seriously is life. I take life seriously because I know people who don't take life seriously and they're either in jail or a dad or mom at a young age. Right now I'm just focusing on my goals of being a doctor.

I also take it seriously when people talk about me. I can take it to a certain point, but then I want to beat them butts because they always got something to say. I don't know why but I take my sports seriously because I feel sports are my life.

-Unknown

From The Beat: We can see why you take these things seriously. Is there a way to be serious without wanting to beat people up? Do you live your life in a way that shows that you take it seriously? How? We appreciate your maturity and wisdom. It's rare at your age.

Taking Serious Stuff Seriously

I take serious stuff seriously, like listening. That's serious and that's what I take seriously because it's important to listen. Because if you ask someone a question they can be telling you the wrong answer. But if you're not listening then you won't know.

Also listening is important because you might be getting a new job and if your boss is telling you to do something and if you're not listening you won't know what to do and you can get fired.

-Tyrica

From The Beat: Yeah, we're sure many of us have experienced not listening when we should and have suffered some consequences behind it. What has been the best advice someone has given you in your lifetime? And who was this person? What's the best advice you ever gave to someone else?

Changes

Okay. If you like someone you should let them know. Right? Right. So that's what I did. But I told a friend and obviously she couldn't keep her mouth shut. But it all started out because I thought he liked me the way he was actin' towards me. When my friend told him, her and my other friend put too much on it and made it seem like I wanted him, you know.

So my other friend's brother talked to the boy I used to like. So she told the boy I used to like that I didn't like him like that. The other girls was just doing too much.

The other day I saw dis piece that I just couldn't resist lookin' at. Until my big-mouth friend who always got to say somethin' told the boy. So all you girls hands off. But if you like someone only tell people you trust and can hold a secret.

-Princess

From The Beat: This is a lot of drama over boys! Don't put so much of your energy into who you like or don't like and who you tell or don't tell that you begin to let important things like your education fall behind. We're not saying that you shouldn't enjoy yourself. But we are saying that if you enjoy yourself at the expense of school, then you will only regret it down the line. You'll have plenty of boyfriends as you grow up, but now is the time to concentrate on school.

Changes

During the past three years a lot has happened to me. I got taller, sexier and mature. I changed my attitude and I started to do my homework and get good grades. I also stopped stealin' like I was, and now I'm on the way to high school next year.

-Jay Jay

From The Beat: We're glad not only to have a piece worth publishing from you (and a good one at that), but also to hear that you've shifted gears, and that you're doing well. We knew there was potential in the person who masks his talents behind playfulness and the desire to be accepted. How far in school do you plan to go? What do you want to study when you're older?

Tacos

I am going to talk about my favorite food. My favorite food is tacos. I really like all the Mexican food. All the Mexican foods are good. When I am really hungry I like to eat any food. But when I am not really hungry my food is tacos. It tastes like Mexican food.

-Carlos

From The Beat: Besides tacos, what other Mexican foods do you eat? The reason we're asking is because it's closing in on the end of our day and we're getting hungry. So take us to what else you like, and don't spare any details! By the way, can you cook any of the foods you like to eat?

Taking It Seriously

What I like to take serious is school because if you don't take it serious you don't do your homework and you don't listen to someone that is explaining something to you and you think of it as a game. You also think that if you don't take something seriously you might think that makes you look too cool to listen to someone's explanation.

But I also take my family serious because they might give you good advice about what they have experienced and what they know, so I should take them serious.

-I Smell Pan

From The Beat: We're firm believers in listening as a way to soak up knowledge. And we're grateful that you've given us the opportunity to hear some of your knowledge. What family member do you take the most serious? And why? What's the best advice you ever got from your family? We bet you have great grades since your taking your schooling serious. What are your grades like?

Carne Adovado

I am going to be talking about my favorite food. My favorite kind is Guatemalan food. I will eat anything that is Guatemalan. One of the foods I love is called carne adovado. This is my favorite kind of food. Carne adovado is a kind of beef that is red and is spicy.

-Watermelon

From The Beat: Mmmmm... Now we're truly hungry! Guatemalan food sounds great. Are most of the foods spicy? Have you been to Guatemala? Did you eat the same things there that you like here? If not, would you like to? Are there any American foods you like also?

School Work

What I take seriously is my work at school because I think that if you don't do your work at school that means you don't have no responsibility. And if you train to get a job and they see your record is not good they won't hire you.

That's why I take seriously my school work, so I can start to have responsibility so when I have my job I know how to be and do so I can be better on my job. And if you are responsible in school and your job at school, you are going to hear how to be more responsible. So that's why I take school seriously.

-Chino

From The Beat: That's a good reason to take school seriously. Do you already know what you want to do when you finally start working? What job interests you right now? What do you want to study when you get to college so that you can do this job? We know you have a whole lot of time to think about it, but it never hurts to start thinking a little early.

One Life To Live

Some things that I take seriously are my education, my life and my family. Some people say that you only got one life to live, so make the best of it. And you know what? I kind of like that saying. For my education I take that very seriously because that is one of my top goals in life.

If you have a great education or just an education, you could do probably anything you want in life. You could have a lot of money, have a great job and study great things.

The other reason I take my education seriously is because I know that I am very bright and I know that if I can work hard enough and if I put my mind to it, I can achieve anything in life.

For my family, I don't like people talking about them because those are the people I really love and the people who are really nice to me. Those are the people I really care about and the people I would be down for no matter what. Also I grew up with them forever and I wouldn't give them up for nothing.

-Rina

From The Beat: Great piece! We can tell you took these topics seriously. You spoke straight from the heart and we're listening to every word. We agree that you can achieve anything you want, but it's not only because you are very bright. Some of the brightest people we know never achieve anything because they have no goals or ambitions. What makes us certain that you will accomplish many things is that you have both the intelligence to do so, and the drive it takes to get there. Now, the only thing left is to decide what you want to achieve. Have you decided yet? Please let us know if we can help you accomplish what you need to. We'd love to see you successful...

Ain't Jus' Me

I'm serious about ma weight and I'm serious about ma friends. You can't tell me I'm fat. And you hurt ma feelings. I'm just gone blow up in yo' face. I'm serious about fake an' real friends. Fake ones go away and get ova yo' self. Real ones don't trip. I got yo' back always. Except when ya become a fake person.

-Hard Hitta

From The Beat: We had to take out FAB because we know how you meant it and we don't promote those kind of words at The Beat. We don't know how often we need to tell you this, but you make yourself look foolish writing hateful things to people, even if you only mean it as a joke. You're brighter than many people your age that we've met, yet you spend your energy bickering about things that shouldn't even take up your time. Maybe your attention should be refocused into something more beneficial to yourself.

Feeling Cold, Wizzy?

My friends really care about me. When I'm cold they're like, "I wish I was there to warm you!" I'm like, "Yeah, me too." I talk to my friends a lot and help 'em. I guess they're family. I ask 'em for their coats and when we talk on the phone we talk about everything.

My best friends are always there. I ask 'em for their coat and they let me use 'em. I'm a girl and they're boys, but who cares? We always play soccer and hang around. We see each other in school even though I'm in 8th grade and they're in 6th. So anyways just wanna say I'm inspired by Scorpion, Marin, one hecka good writer. Oh, I wanna give a shout out to Victor M., Rafa G., and Jorge M. Thanks for everything. See you when I see you!

-Wizzy

From The Beat: We're glad you gave a shout out to one of our more beloved writers. It sounds like you have some really good friends. It's nice of people to offer you their coats when you're cold. That's love, fa' real. What do you do for them in return? What kind of friend are you? We're assuming a good one since we always like talking with you in our workshops.

Coptel De Camarones

My favorite food is coptel de camarones. My favorite time to eat my meal breakfast is at 8:00. My favorite time to eat my lunch is at 3:00, and my dinner 7:00. My favorite meal is ice cream.

My mom do my favorite food because the first time I tried to do the coptel de camarones is not the same as when my mom does it. I want to learn how my mom does the food because I want to try to do it.

-Victor

From The Beat: It was very clever, writing the times you like to eat. We often get caught up in other things and forget to eat at a regular time every day. Do you feel different when you don't eat at these times? You forgot to tell us what coptel de camarones is made of? What's in it and how do you cook it? If ice cream was a meal, it would probably be our favorite to, but we don't think you can live on ice cream. We're willing to give it a try, though...

Favorite Food

Well, I'm going to tell you about my favorite food. The best food that I like is tacos. Well tacos is my favorite food. I like it when my mom cooks the meat and adds the things it needs inside. My mom cooks and makes the best tacos. Well we like it when she makes tacos for dinner. Well that is my favorite food.

-Oscar

From The Beat: What kind of meat does your mother use for her tacos? Do you know what else she puts in her tacos? The only reason we're asking is because you make it sound so good we want to make our own tacos.

Life Is Short

The thing that I take seriously is my life because it's not long. Also I take serious everything I do have. The other thing I take seriously is my mom and my dad because their life is not long. And what I do for them is I treat them good and everything.

-Guadalupe

From The Beat: That's very respectable. What are some things you do for your mom and dad? Do you help around the house? Sometimes the best way to help our families is by helping ourselves. Are you doing all your school work? That's the best way to help yourself.

School Is Serious

What I take seriously is school. But sometimes I don't take it seriously because I sometimes want to have fun at the school. But I have to take it seriously because if I don't or somebody doesn't they won't do the homework or not pass a grade.

-Oswaldo

From The Beat: That's very wise of you. There's nothing wrong with having fun at school, as long as you know when to be serious, and you're being productive at the same time. What could make learning more fun for you? Could The Beat help in any way?

Home-style Pig

I like eating home-style pig. First buy a pig. Second slit the throat. Third cut the stomach. Empty out the guts. Then put a long wooden stick through the pig. Then start a fire. Roast for about one hour and a half. Then get your grub on.

-Tonga Truck

From The Beat: It sounds like a brutal ritual (especially for the pig), but we guess it all pays off in the end. (We don't plan to give up eating pork!) How often does your family roast a pig? Do they only do it on special occasions? Have you ever had the duty of slitting the pig's throat? Agggghhhh!

Smooth Stranger

Hey smooth stranger. I've never seen you before, walking around the neighborhood, smellin' good and lookin' fly. I have a question but may I ask why?

I'm not trying to throw a line at you or nothing.

I'm just askin' a question. Where you come from?

Why you actin' all shy? I see you hiding behind your gracious looks

that might explain, smooth stranger.

Your voice is so smooth and mellow.

It kind of reminds me of a great big cello,

just like the beat of a jazz song

that keeps going on, playing in my head.

The color of your eyes might give me a surprise of hazel and several different other beautiful colors.

Where you going smooth stranger?

Oh, you have to go. Don't go far. Stay cool and smooth, stranger.

-Midnight

From The Beat: Even though we love some of the images in this poem (like a voice so mellow it reminds you of a cello)/we can't help but believe that this fascination with a man you don't even know/ puts your energy and attention where it should not go/Don't judge a book or a human by its cover/Cause what looks fly may make a lousy lover/In regards to boys, don't act the fool/Forget the stranger and concentrate on school!

African Queen

African Queen I am, I know.

Don't let me stop you from looking at me

From my head to my toe.

African Queen with your jet-black hair

Look like you just stepped out of a Jet black magazine.

African Queen with your chocolate milk skin

You stand out like a spot on the skin

African Queen your skin is so soft

Just like a cloud from the sky

African Queen, African Queen

You are so gracious, that's all I mean

-Midnight

From The Beat: You beautifully describe the beauty of this African Queen — yourself! But we'd like to know about what's going on inside. Are the contents as beautiful as the cover? (By the way, have you ever heard of a very old, black and white movie, called 'The African Queen'? It's one of our all-time favorites, with Katherine Hepburn and Humphrey Bogart (1951). We recommend it, even though it's not about a beautiful black woman but about a broken-down boat and, of course, love.)

I Don't Understand

I don't understand...

How a man can lay up with women until they're pregnant

How a woman can't explain to her child

How the mom can take care of the baby and the daddy can't

But most of all...

How people hate others instead of loving them

How people lead others to danger

How people argue over stupid stuff

How you take the money over people

What I understand most is...

How much your mom loves you

How much you care for people

How many people love me

How hard I work

-Tyrica

From The Beat: What an amazing poem! What we understand is that you are a very bright and powerful young woman. You have the gift to move mountains and probably aren't even fully aware of all that you possess. How do you try to understand the things you don't understand? How did you come by such wisdom at such a young age? Thank you for such an excellent piece.



Serious Or Delirious?

Wat Up!! I take my friends very seriously. I really care about them and I love them. I can talk to them about anything. I guess I trust them more than my family. I'm not hating my family. It's just that I don't trust them as much as I trust my friends.

The problem with my friends is that they fight. I don't know why. Is it me? I mean they're boys and I'm a girl. Is that why? When they talk smack about each other, I get real mad and start yelling.

-Wizzy

From The Beat: We hate to see our friends fighting too. It really is a helpless feeling, huh? What do you do to try and help when they're about to fight? Do you ever try talking to them between fights so that they're more ready to listen? It's interesting that you trust your friends more than your family. What has your family done to lose your trust?

El Mensaje Para Mi Gente Latina

El mensaje para toda mi gente Latina sería que tenemos que parar la violencia o hacer daño en la comunidad en donde habitamos. Por ejemplo, respetar a los que te respetan y respetar a tus personas mayores que ti.

Algo especial sería que todos debemos tener una buena conducta. Otra cosa es que los padres de familias tienen que enseñarles a sus hijos como respetar a los demás o si ellos quieren que se acerquen al camino de Dios. Así es como todos debemos evitar la violencia en todo el mundo.

From The Beat: Esperamos que ellos escuchen tu consejo porque si en realidad no hacemos algo por este mundo vamos a destruirlo poco a poco. ¿Has pensado en posibilidades en como la violencia pudiera desminuirse? Estamos seguro que si todos pusieramos un esfuerzo este mundo fuera diferente, pero para esto necesitamos gente como tú, que esten dispuesto a ayudar y a ser lider.

A Message For My Latin People

A message for all my Latin people would be, we need to stop the violence or causing harm in the communities in which we live in. For example: Respect those who respect you and respect the people that are older than you.

Something special would be that we all should have good conduct. Another thing is that the parents in families have to show their children how to respect others if they want their children to come closer to the ways of God. That is how we should all avoid the violence in the entire world.

-Nonomis, Marin

From The Beat: We hope that they listen to your advice because in all reality, if we don't do something for this world, we're going to destroy it little by little. Have you thought about possibilities of how the violence could be diminished? We're positive that if we all put a little effort, this world would be different, but in order for this to happen, we need people like you who are willing to help and willing to be leaders.

El Accidente

Yo le puedo comentar que yo soy vendedor de droga, pero he pensado dejar de hacer esto porque he estado pensando en lo que pase hace dos años. Yo tube un accidente y luego me llevaron para el hospital y luego me operaron. Me puse a pensar en mi familia, en mis amigos y mi novia. Por eso quiero dejar las calles y la venta de drogas. Ya no quiero volver a caer preso y no le quiero dar preocupaciones a mi mama.

Cuando ustedes vayan a hacer cualquier cosa como vender drogas o robarse un carro, piensanla bien en su familia para que no pases lo que yo he pasado. Este mensaje se los envía un Hondureño del Pedernal.

From The Beat: Pues la propia vida se ha encargado de abrirte los ojos al mundo. Vemos que aprendistes algo de esta experiencia y esperamos que todos escuchen este mensaje que has enviado. ¿Dino cuales son tus planes cuando salgas? ¿Que tienes en mente hacer para no volver a lo mismo? ¿Como le haras para alejarte de lo negativo que te trajo aqui? ¿Tienes algo en mente?

The Accident

I can share with y'all that I am a drug dealer, but I've been thinking about not doing this anymore because I've been thinking about what I went through about two years ago. I had an accident and then they took me to the hospital and then they operated on me. I started to think about my family, my friends, and my girlfriend. That's why I want to leave the streets and the selling of drugs alone. I don't want to get arrested again and I don't want to make my mother worry.

When y'all go and do whatever thing like sell drugs or steal a car, think about your families real hard before acting so y'all don't have to go through what I am going through right now. This message is being sent to y'all from a Hondurean del Pedernal.

-Oscar B2

From The Beat: Well, your own life has taken charge in opening your eyes to the world. We see that you learned something from that experience and we hope that everyone listens to this message that you have sent. Tell us: What are your plans once you get out of here? What do you have planned to do so you don't go back to doing the same things? What will you do to distance yourself from the negativity that brought you in here? Do you have something in mind?

Mis Pensamientos Sobre Los Temas

Estamos en tus zapatos, a donde nos vas a llevar? Los voy a llevar a la historia que tuve en México. Tubimos que agarrar el tren de carga, y luego caminamos el decierto por cinco días hasta que llegamos a donde íbamos.

El mejor verano que he tenido es el verano del 2004 porque los demás veranos los he pasado en prisión.

Las cosas no comienzan tristes, somos nosotros quienes los hacemos triste. Cuando hacemos algo o nos pasa algo, decimos que las cosas son tristes.

From Ther Beat: Que lastima que hayas pasado por muchas cosas para venir aqui. ¿Crees que valió la pena haber llegado aqui? ¿No te has dado cuenta que hicistes un gran esfuerzo por venir aqui y luego perderlo por nada? ¿Cual es la razón que estas pasando todo estos verano en prisión? ¿Que es lo que te está pasando?

My Thoughts On The Topics

We're in your shoes; where are you going to take us? I'm going to take y'all to the story that I had in Mexico. We had to catch the cargo train and then we walked in the desert for five days until we arrived to where we were going.

The best summer that I have ever had was the summer of 2004 because the other summers I've spent them in prison.

Things don't start off sad. We're the ones who make things sad. When we do something or something happens to us, that's when we say that things are sad.

-Jose, B4

From The Beat: What a shame that you had to go through so many things just to come over here! Do you believe that it was worth coming over here? Haven't you realized that you made a huge effort just to come over here and let it go to waste over nothing? What is the reason why you are spending all these summers in prison? What is happening to you?

Las cosas no
comienzan tristes,
somos nosotros
quienes los
hacemos triste

Tengo Nuevos Planes

Hola me llamo Jose y les quisiera platicar mi historia. Pues todo comenzo una tarde cuando mi primo llevo en una van con dos viejas. El me dijo que me querian conocer y le las presento. Después me hice novio de una de ellas, pero cuando me di cuenta ya estaba metido en problemas. Deje de hablarle a mi familia.

Ahora tengo nuevos planes porque aqui en la carcel he comprendido varias cosas. Ahora que salga de aqui voy a salir adelante y no me voy a encular con solo una sola vieja. Ahora que salga voy a ser un Casanova y me voy a portar como todo un caballero.

From The Beat: ¿Que pasó con tu chava? ¿Qué te hizo? ¿Por que vas a cambiar tu forma de ser? No hay mejor cosa que ser una persona justa, sincera y fiel. Teniendo muchas muchachas solo te causará muchos problemas y peligran las enfermedades sexuales. ¿Alguna vez has conocido algún Casanova feliz?

I Have New Plans

Hello, my name is Jose and I would like to share with y'all my story. Well, it all began one afternoon when my cousin came through in a van with two females. He told me that they wanted to get to know me and he introduced them to me. Then, I became one of the girls' boyfriend, but when I found out, I was already in some problems. I stopped talking with my family.

Now I have new plans because here in jail, I've comprehended various things. Now when I get out of here, I am going to strive forward and I am not going to stick with just one female. Now when I get out, I am going to be a Casanova and I am going to behave myself like any gentleman would.

-Jose, B4

From The Beat: What happened with your lady? What did she do to you? Why are you going to change the way you are? There's nothing better than to be a just, sincere, and faithful person. Having many females will just cause many problems and also create the risk of getting a sexually transmittable disease. Have you ever met a Casanova who was happy?



This world of constant pain
These daily on-going struggles
I see freedom over the horizon
If only I could fly like a sparrow
To that life of happiness
Break these chains and overcome
These tears of pain
So I can fly free

HUB It must be hard to love someone on the outside from jail. Sure, there are probably thoughts of jealousy, wondering who your partner is out there spending time with. What we've learned is that, even out here, the only people we have control over is ourselves, so if someone wants to be what we find when we're 'in search of love' then we shouldn't have a choice but to appreciate it. As he writes from Salinas Valley State Prison in Soledad, CA, we understand that doing time in search for love is hard. How will you show your appreciation once you've found it, Hub. Hopefully people will search and find some similarities between you and them while reading this piece. We have no doubt in our minds that they will.

The Story of a Man in Search Of Love

As I sit and observe the world
From my cold and lonely cell window
Memories poor into my mind
And my emotions begin to take over
Bringing smiles, frowns, and salty tears
To my innocent eyes
My world becomes grey and cloudy
With fears
Fears of losing
Losing everything I had
Everything I dreamed and hoped for
Which isn't very much at all
My hopes and dreams add up to "true love"
The rain hits my window
To tell me that I'm running out of time
My world's surroundings consist of elements
That is choking out all my desires
I begin to realize I need to snap out of this lifestyle
This world of constant pain
These daily on going struggles
I see freedom over the horizon
If only I could fly like a sparrow
To that life of happiness
Break these chains and overcome
These tears of pain
So I can fly free
To my true love
Thank you

Does anybody know when they
become institutionalized, or does it
just sneak up on them?

KENNETH FLOYD We just received the following letter via mail yesterday and it moved us so much we thought we'd print it for your reading pleasure. This is from Kenneth Floyd, 29 years old, who just completed 3 years of a 15-year mandatory sentence. He expresses his feelings as he's settling in to his "dehumanizing" environment. Yes, it's a very sad piece, which we are sure tragically many of you can relate to. We thank Kenneth and hope to hear from him again. He writes us from an adult prison called Apakchee Correctional Institution in Sneads, Florida.

An Excerpt From A Letter

15 years mandatory. 29 years old. It's been 3 years now. I feel like an old man. I felt like I was just a kid when they gave me this sentence and nothing but reality has set in. I'm tired of people. I would like to be by myself sometimes instead of waking every morning with 72 other people around me. Wait to use the sink. Wait in line to go to chow. Wait to clear count. Wait to go to the yard. Wait to come back from the yard. Every day the same old thing. All the days just blend together. It's hard to remember a definite day. They're all the same here in the chain gang. It's sad.

You get used to this place and dream dreams of this place. It's sad. Am I institutionalized? I don't know. Does anybody know when they become institutionalized, or does it just sneak up on them? Sometimes the only thing that cheers me up is that I don't have it as bad as others. I have a release date, 6/29/2018 but I know people who don't have a release date. They have life. This is home until they die. It's sad to say but its true.

Life is not fair, but I played with the devil and this is the hand I was dealt. I thought drugs were cool. Then I got addicted. I saw people steal for drugs. I said I wouldn't do that. Well, I lied. I did do that and here I am.

MIGUEL MASCORRO Stepping up next in The Beat Within studio is Miguel, writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA. He grabs the mic like he owns it and when he does everyone else pay attention. He's not just rapping to rap, he actually has some things to get off his chest. And though he's not making a million dollar record deal yet, we can tell that if he pursues it, he might be the next big thing in the entertainment industry. Read on and tell us if you would buy his album

Night Creeper

(Chorus): "Night creeper, bloody grim-reaper"

(Verse I): "I wake-up in the middle of the night, sweating, thinking about fool raising his hand to you, and then I'll creep around the corner and put his butt six feet under...."

When his homies come creeping around, I'll become the bloody grim-reaper underground! When you're asleep, deep in your thought, the only thing that you think about is the night creeper, bloody grim reaper...

(Chorus): "Night creeper, bloody grim reaper, Night creeper, bloody grim reaper"

(Verse II): I wake-up bound in chains, I don't know what to do because I can't stand this pain, I look around and see nothing but flames....

Grim reaper appears all up in your face laughing and saying my past is due and now I have to pay. He sticks his hook all up in my guts saying out loud he finally caught this crazy nut....

(Chorus):

(Verse III): I look-up to see it's time to go toe-to-toe, blow for blow because he wants my soul, you know....

If he gets it, he'll take my soul below and stick my skull with my soul, in a pitch black hole...

VINCENT WILLIAMS

Yes indeed, look who is back in The Beat Within, one of The Beat's most popular and loyal writers, especially when he was a detainee in 150 aka Alameda County Juvenile Hall where he spent a lot of his teen age years. If you do not know Vincent's work, well let just say he is a young writer who is never short of words when it came to writing his thoughts in The Beat Within, he always kept it real in his stories and poetry, and today, hard to believe, almost a year later, since we last heard from him, Vincent Williams resumes the tradition and writes us his CYA realities from the CYA's NA Chaderjian in Stockton, CA. Well with fingers crossed Vincent is back and will stay with us, as he delivers a great taste of writing on his CYA life which if you are heading that way, we encourage you to take notice. Plus, Vincent writes two stellar poems that are very touching, especially the magnificent "Rain On My Window."

Look Who's Back

Time keeps on ticking... one minute... one hour... one day... one week...one month... one year. That's about how long I have been in the California Youth Authority. Give or take two months. It is my apologies to The Beat and to readers of The Beat that I have not written in so many moons. I have gone through a lot more changes. I've learned a whole lot more and I am a better person. Allow me to give you an overview of my time spent in CYA up until today...

In the beginning it was rough. Settling in was not as easy as I thought it would be. When I was at Preston, I was constantly faced with the possibility of a fight. Tension was thick as molasses and at any moment anything could happen. Before I left for Dewitt Nelson Youth Correctional Facility, I had engaged in two fist fights after being shipped off to Dewitt in Stockton California, I was sure I would settle in with no problem. Again things didn't turn out as expected.

I arrived at Dewitt Nelson. When the gate opened up for the van to enter, I was hit with my first view of the facility. It seems that the first time that you look at something it seems so new, so pure, and so beautiful, like viewing a house or some type of property you would like to purchase. So I was let out of the van in my white paper suit and shackles on my feet. The cops took the shackles and cuffs off and allowed me to stretch and get some air. As I shook my legs and rubbed my wrists, I took the time to look around. The place looked like some sort of summer camp. A large field for baseball, soccer, and football laid smack dab in the middle. And around the field were the living units or halls/dorms as they call them here. There was a gym, school building and a swimming pool. The place looked cool, but as I would soon find out, it wasn't.

I was assigned to Yosemite Hall. One of the more "mature" halls. When I arrived on the hall, I saw that there was a big day room. A television was on, but when I stepped in it was like someone snatched away all of the noise except the TV. Heads turned in my direction and at that moment I was full of anxiety and nervousness. The YCC (Youth Corrections Counselor) ushered me into the back where the dorm wings were located. I was assigned a bunk and that was it.

For the first couple of days I didn't talk to anybody. Then I was allowed to attend school. At school I saw a few familiar faces which made me feel more comfortable, 'cause when in jail, if you don't know anybody, you're a loner. And if you are a loner, you become a target for people to prey on. So I shook my two old homies' hands. We talked a little bit, and then the police yelled at us to go to class. School was as expected, boring but education needed. After a week, I was a little more comfortable to try to talk to people on the hall. The first person I talked to was a guy from Stockton. Both his brother Weezy and his little brother Poppa are in CYA too. We chopped it up about Oakland and CYA.

Once I started talking to him everybody wanted to introduce themselves. A lot of the guys on their hall I didn't want to be around because they were locked up for sex offenses, like molesting, rape and a host of other nasty charges. The worse thing to be labeled as in CYA is a S-O (Sex Offender). Nobody respects S-O's so I kept my distance.

Time went by and I started to learn a lot about the games played in CYA, alot of mind games. And if a person wasn't cautious they could end up in a whole lot of trouble. I got a taste of that trouble, and I didn't go out looking for a fight. I

I am proud to announce that as of yesterday I
earned all of my high school credits
and will get my high school diploma

minded my own business. So I was surprised when another ward on my hall started talking to me like I was some type of animal. I quickly told him to get away from me. And since he would not listen, I turned around and walked away. I had walked away from a fight, and that was considered a big weakness in CYA.

As I walked away he started calling me all the names in the book. I kept walking. Now, at this point, I had walked away. But if he came towards me again I wasn't walking away. So that's what he did. He began walking behind me like my shadow. "Get from behind me." I told him, but he wasn't listening. So I stopped and turned around. Everyone in the day room (rec room) was looking at the two of us. So this guys cussing me out some more. Then he pushed me... oops. And it was on. After that first fight it was like everyone was challenging me: Wanting to fight me. In a month's time, I was engaged in three more fights.

By the time I had my third fight, I knew I had to do something or risk a chance of having time added to my sentence. I spoke to the parole agent and asked her to send me to a more kicked back place. She told me about a special program at N.A. Chad. I was reluctant to sign the paper work because of some of the things I heard that happened at Chad. But in the end, for the betterment of me, I gave my signature. Three days later I was cuffed, put into a van and driven next door. Really, Chad is right next to Dewitt Nelson. A thirty second ride and I was at Chad.

I am here at Chad now and have been here since January 11th. If I had to describe my program I would say I am holding considerably well. The hall I am on is called McCloud Hall. It is a treatment hall, which basically means that people in this hall often have a more of a chance than getting out and not coming back then a lot of the other halls.

So, here I am, sitting at a desk in this cell. I've had a few ups and downs but nothing to really be outrageous. I am one of the four members of N.A. Chaderjian Cadet Corps Color Guard. I am ranked as a CPL And I hold a lot of responsibility.

CYA is not the best place to be. But if I had no choice then to be here I'd rather be on this hall. I have a cell to myself with a desk and shelves. I have a television in my cell, radio to entertain myself. My daily routine is wake up, do cadet work out (that's when all seven cadets exercise), wash up, eat breakfast, go to group, I have to attend a number of different resource groups. Four of which I have voluntarily attended and completed. After group is school. I am doing very well in school. Matter of fact, I am proud to announce that as of yesterday I earned all of my high school credits and will get my high school diploma on September 15th at the graduating ceremony.

Anyhow after school I just lounge around the hall and watch TV or talk to three of the only people here who I trust enough to have around. Showers, dinner and the evening program, sometimes I stay in my cell to watch TV if something good is on, or to read a book. I still read a lot. My TV stays off half the time. I have not really been taking the time to write a lot because of other things. I still write and now that I no longer have to stress over studying economic home work or political boundaries, I can pick back up on my writing!

It's been awhile since I've been in the Beat pages. But I am here now. And will continue to be. I will start a story. But as for now I will say hello and as-salom-wu-lakum to all. This is Vincent, and I pray that everyone is doing well as possible considering the circumstances of being behind the walls. I will be back soon, real soon. This was just to say hey and to inform all on my progress. Until next time when pen meets paper in a graceful manor of testimony. Peace! Special greetings to Allan Tinker and David Inocencio!

Her Shadowed Soul

It seems like yesterday that we first met;
the sparkle in your eyes told me that I was your world
Damn, that was yesterday,
now today brings heartbreak and hurt, you're no longer
my girl
Leaving me so, in the middle of the night, as I fought to
stay awake
In love I gave you everything, my heart, my soul, my body,
but from you what did I take?
Nothing, not a dime of your money, never wasted your
time
Was on call whenever you needed me
To only leave me in the dark,
to wake up and realize how you choose to flee
It's true, maybe I was wrong
for not really telling you how it was in my past
But even if I had, can you sit and honestly tell me
that the feelings you felt would last?
Now I sit here and wonder about the times we spent
in the presence of each other
And then I think that maybe my wrongs are not the
problem
maybe you found another
Still my heart yearns to feel hear and taste you,
which I might as well let go
But before I do take a second to read this letter I wrote
just so you know
The sun will set, rising again to begin another day
which will lead to tomorrows forever.
And when I open me eyes tomorrow morning,
the only thing that will be left of you
will be your presence lost I feared
And on my pillow case your lip stick
like a everlasting reminder, smeared.

Rain On My Window

Drops like the tears of a broken hearted lover
Find refuge away from clouds deep gray
Little shiny liquid drops fall before my eyes
On this gloomy wet hazy day
Sprinkle they do
Ever so lightly upon the earth
Feeding fields and flowers
Peacefully defining what the small things are worth
Oh yes I do like to watch
As the rain calmly claims its place among vegetation
Pouring down unto what is now
Oh yes I love to watch!
Speeding up - falling faster
No longer like tear drops but like sobs and pains
Pounding into the ponds and lakes afar
Like angry sobs are these heavy rains
I appreciate the rain for what it's worth
Helping to keep the cycles of evolution flowing
Going right back around, back to life
Which always keeps me knowing
That it's days like this
I cherish the most when I am feeling low
Shut off from a world that has lost its glow
Sitting here crying, heart broken in pieces
As I watch the rain of my window...

ADAM The Beat gets all over the place. According to this writer, the following pieces are the first we've ever published from Newark, New Jersey. So we're proud to bring you another "first." Adam, age 16, promotes his positive message from the Essex County Youth Detention Center.

You're My Friend

(Dedicated to all the homies)
Home is where my heart is
And that's where I should be
We been through thick and thin
Good and bad
But don't matter what
You never made me sad
You always been a friend to me
Even when I was your enemy

Dear The Beat Within

What's 'hood (been going on)? My name is Adam, and I'm writing you straight from the streets of Newark, at Essex County Youth Detention Center. I'm 16 years old, and I am arrested for homicide and armed robbery.

I'm glad to say that I've been writing poems (novels) on my life and the way I live. In your books, I've never seen a single writing from Newark, so I'm sending you a poem that was written by me. I will like for y'all to don't forget about NEWARK! We here at Essex County Youth House will appreciate y'all putting my poem in ya book.

Thank you for real!

Don't Give Up!

Just when I don't think I can take no more
(been disappointed too many times),
one of my homie puts their arm around me and says,
"If you don't give up then you'll be fine."
At times in life, I've done so well. I've spent times on the
top.
I've also been in ruins, demoralized and dropped.
That's just the way things are. You can never expect
more.
Half the time you're winning, and the rest you're on the
floor.

This world's as full of beauty as it is of hate.
That's just the way it is. Some things won't ever change.
Focus on the positive, and use your mind.
Don't ever give up, and you'll be just fine.
Some of them like drugs, and some of them like to fight.
Negativity inspired somewhere every single night.
Got to set examples for the weak of mind.
Don't stop spreading knowledge till the end of time.

So many hateful people, so many are deranged.
It can take its toll on you when life gets rearranged
It's a proven fact that you get what you give
And you can make an impact in the way your life is lived

Focus on the positive, and use your mind.

Don't ever give up, and you'll be just fine.

G. ALVARADO It is so good to have back in our pages the very talented and thoughtful G. Alvarado. We are so honored that this gifted teacher pours out his heart with the following poetry which he recently sent our way. The Beat Within has truly missed G's voice too. The first poem you are about to read, "Nadie" (which means "nobody, no one" in Spanish) was written this past May, 2006. G. Alvarado writes us from Calipatria State Prison in Calipatria, CA. We definitely look forward to read and hear more from our dear and loyal friend.

Soul

Colorless
Odorless
Bodiless

The sentiment
Before sound

An Intrinsic Urge
I am no longer a child
But
Sometimes
I feel
Like crawling
Under my bed
To weep out
My sorrows

What Have We Become
What have we become

We walk in circles
Talk in circles

We greet
Each new day
With an equal sense
Of despair

Never satisfied
Always chasing
"The something else
missing"

Somewhere else
Outside our own lives

What have we become?

I stay quiet
My mind grows tired
The heart
Is exhausted with desire

When everything
Is finally done
Where will we
Call home?
What have we become?

Untitled

See it when you see it

Know it when you know it

Notice yourself
Seeking to get a grip
Of who you are

"Why?" you ask

"Why so many questions
and not enough time
to sort them out"

Now you know
there's another presence
living in your life
a shadowy figure
mocking your flimsy
thoughts

Who you wonder?

Look in the mirror
And ask: Is thou me?

Nadie

I am Nadie
Son of no one

I have neither father
Nor a mother
Who planted
This seed

I am Nadie
Son of no one

I came from the soil
Water, and air
But I owe them
No tribute

I have nothing to share
I exist nowhere
Nowhere
Is my home

I am Nadie
Son of on one
Whisperer
Of things unsaid
Dweller of darkness
Daughter of the moonless night

I have no matter
Nor a metaphysical form
No ideas
Nothing to exist for

I am Nadie
Son of no one

Ghosts

My friend
Here we are
Trying to piece together
This broken puzzle
Our lives have become

"Us"

The sons of fathers
Who didn't care to stay
To shape, and nurture us

No

They didn't bother
They left, like cowards
Under the cloud of night
And ran away
Releasing themselves
Of all responsibilities
As if the very nature
Of having been born
Was our own fault

They left
To seek other glories
That didn't include us
"their sons"

My friend
How are we to understand
The nature
And role
Of our masculinity
When our fathers
Are mere fainting ghosts
Vanishing into uncertain days

How are we
To battle these demons
Haunting our lives
When they are
The inherited shadows
Of our fathers
And the root
Of all theirs
And our mistakes

I Believe

It is not about becoming "somebody"
Because we are a "somebody" since
We were in our mother's womb
It's about finding
A place in life
About discovering our unique imprint
And sharing ourselves
With the world
It's about participating
And never grow weary
Of the trails ahead

It's about finding

A place in life

About discovering our unique imprint
And sharing ourselves

Some Thoughts

I am not a warrior
Pretending to be brave
I am not a romantic
Chasing cupid's arrow
I am not an artist
Trying to depict
My soul's quest
I am only
A fragmented story
Trying to find
The missing links

I
Indifference
Is the number one killer
Of our soul

II
Imagination
Is the language
Of our spirit

III
The cruelest of tragedy
It is not
That we will all perish one day
The cruelest
Of tragedy
Is to live in ignorance

Everyone wants justice
Black
Brown
White
Young
Old
Man
Woman
Everyone!
So why not declare altogether
"We want justice"

G. ALVARADO (CONT.)

A Harvest of Disposal

It hurts
To my bones
To know
Hopelessness is a poison
Ingrained in the very
Organism of countless souls
That paradise on Earth
Has already been bargained
And sold to the highest bidders
That
The fate of millions
Was decided

By the mere act
Of having been born
In the wrong time
With the wrong
Parents
The wrong gender
The wrong shape
The wrong face
The wrong color
The wrong language
The wrong belief
And worst of all
In the wrong planet:
"Our Earth"

the mere act
Of having been born
In the wrong time
With the wrong
Parents

Things I Never Saw

I never saw my parents
Love
Kiss
Hug
Or share a laugh with each other

I never saw my parents
Cry
Hate
Or argue with one another

I never saw my parents together
Once

Gimmicks By Design

Things change
Everything
That once was
No longer is

Different ideals
Form new reactions

Who am I,
Who are you?
I ask...
No answer
Just an echoless
Gust of wind
Sweeping my pleas away

We are living
In a bizarre dream
A misperception
Of what it means to be

What do we really know
About being warriors
Or dying for a righteous cause

To whom do I owe my loyalty
To the green walkers
Whose actions are
Without feeling or thought

Or to my homeboys
If any at all exist

I hear many theories
Of how life should be
And what some of us
Should be doing with ourselves

So what should I do?
Sit around
And wait for others to decide

And maybe
Catch another ten or twenty
More years to stay

Better yet
That life sentence
The judge reserved
For a later time
Will be finally mine

Each day
The battle
To keep my sanity
Amidst this madness continues
Once or twice
I've wanted to give up
To throw my hands up
And surrender to the worst
Part of me

I'm sick and tired
Of being clueless in my own life
I need a real reason

To continue
Not a mysterious gain
For the good in me
I'm trying to reawake

Once again
I'm pestered by ideals
Not of my own
Founded
To defend a cause
Which up to this moment
I don't have a clue
Of what exactly
It is supposed to be about

Here I am
Stuck in my cell
Listening to my cellie
Describe
In great detail
The latest
Building fight...

Here I am
Choking on mace
On unseen
Particles of poison
Left to graze
In my lungs

Polluting my mind
With more
Questions of "why!"

MICHAEL CABRAL Not yet in his 20s, Michael Cabral has become one of those BWO writers whose pieces we wait impatiently to receive and read and think about. His descriptive skills are as powerful as any we've ever published, and his power of observation, thought and passionate honesty make every piece he submits shine in our eyes. Here, in addition to a very moving letter that expresses emotions every prisoner everywhere will instantly recognize — and which credits The Beat for being an ear — he also sends a rap. "What If It Wasn't Me?" poses deep questions to those of us quick to condemn — and then forget about — those we cast into prison, wondering whether we "could stand as strong" if we were in his shoes. Michael seeks comfort through writing from his cell at Pelican Bay State Prison.



Dearest Beat

Hello, and how are you doing? Because I know that life can be quite harsh at times, I truly do hope that you are maintaining your obvious strength to endure.

As for me... well, nothing every really changes on the surface of my world. Still, some days seem to be better than others. And right now, I'm just fed up with everything going on over here! Of course I'm doing okay and, without a doubt, I feel like I can handle almost anything thrown my way. But for some reason or another, I woke up this morning completely aware of my surroundings: the walls, the conversations taking place, the guards, my breakfast — everything! Then, when I stopped to think about it, I realized that this is my life. And yet, none of it is at all familiar to me... may never be.

I caught myself, after breakfast, flipping through my photo collection — which I rarely do any more because it is so hard on my soul to have to remember where I'm supposed to be and who I'm supposed to be with. In one picture, there is me, about ten years old, dressed in a lady's bathrobe (with the chest of it stuffed with two balloons). My sister — two years older than I — has her hands over the balloon and were just laughing like crazy! In another photo, a little deeper into my stack, my niece, Emma, is crying her little eyes out... because my sister is brushing her hair! It is so funny! Anyway, I am so, so, so sick of being away from my family... I just want to go home now.

This isn't the first time, but today after realizing where I am and where I may never be again, I felt a strong urge to grab anybody who would listen by the shirt and yell in their face that "This is enough!" That, although it's no excuse for anything, I was and still am just a kid. I've learned my lesson. I'm scared. I'm sorry... But guess what — there wasn't anybody here to listen to me, at least, not until I picked up my pen to write to you. So, once again, Beat, I am very thankful for you...

What If It Wasn't Me?

What if it wasn't me
At six a.m. rollin' my mattress
Yellin' "Buenos dias" to the homies
Knowing they're all just actors?
And what if it wasn't me
Hittin' push-ups in big numbers
To disguise one pain in my chest
With another?
Steady writing my lil' brother;
It's supposed to ease the sufferin'
Yet I'm crazy missing him
With each memory expelled from my pen
But what if it wasn't me
Silently shedding tears
In the still of the night
Because I'm tired of livin' scared?
Ain't no book ever written
Can take my mind off my life;
Neighbor might be a drunk
With a grudge and a knife
Just deal with it, right?...
Easier said than done
I've seen enough blood shed
To know this game isn't fun —
Got homies killin' homies
Because a stranger might approve
This is my life to live, though
My life to lose
Now what if it wasn't me
Would I still be "wrong"?
Could you stand as strong as I in my shoes
With the courage to live on?
Homie, what if it wasn't me?
What if it wasn't me...?
What if it wasn't me
With the nightmares and flashbacks
Praying to God that they'll stop
And having the devil answer back
Trying to fight the past
With liquor, Prozac, and amphetamines?
What if it wasn't me
With no future ahead of me
Letting me take two steps
But always in the wrong direction
'Cause every which way I turn
There's another wall in my presence?
And what if it wasn't me
Whose sole aspiration
Is to one day be home again
With familiar smiling faces?
Which is a beautiful motivation
But consider its origin
What if it wasn't me
A mere child hated by grown men
Nineteen in the pen
Without a friend to trust
Always expected to give in
And expected to give up?
What if it wasn't me
And instead it was you
Who's criticized for his every action
But never what he's been through?
And what if the tables were turned
Would I still be "wrong"?
Could you stand strong as I in my shoes
With the courage to live on?
Homie, what if it wasn't me?

Could you stand as strong as I in my shoes
With the courage to live on?

Dear Beat Family

I am ashamed to acknowledge it, but it has been many moons since I penned a missive addressed solely to The Beat crew. And with equal shame, I admit my absence is nearly inexcusable. But if it makes anyone feel better, I assure you all, I had a good cause. Well, if I'm to be totally honest, I must inform you all, I had planned to write several weeks back of my intended flight from The Beat's pages, yet that letter was either not written or went astray. However, now that I find myself of a different frame of mind, let me pray these pages reach you all.

Well, you should all know that I have carved out a little temporary niche for myself in one of CDCR's numerous outposts. And, like all her levels of hell, this one is just as perilous and circumscribed. Maybe even more so, for it is in this forsaken place where I had the misfortune to run up against men of cunning and brain with a better outlet for their talents than intrigue, conspiracy, and manipulation. And it was from this ghastly prison, I learned I had spent my life as a small raft, pushed and pulled at the direction, sometimes the wish, of others. Spent my life rudderless and without direction, not only in troubled waters, but in calm waters as well. I discovered that I should have foundered long ago, being such an unworthy ocean vessel that I was. Yet, the pain my foes and prison inflicted upon me, gave me at long last, a star to steer by, and my will alone filled my sails many a trying time.

So, whether I'll be lucky enough to escape the clutches of this particular guillotine once more remains to be seen. Until then, I'm content to realize I must stay alert, vigilant, and tread carefully, for my current outpost has not lost any of its treacherousness. In fact, I shudder to say it, but the atmosphere here has grown even more thick with cruel misery, from when I last departed. Thus, I observe every soul with a keen eye, and tune my ear to the slightest sound

ISRAEL PEREZ It is always a pleasure to receive compliments, and The Beat is not above appreciating flattery. But for us, even more than his words of support for our efforts, we are thrilled to be able to bring you one of the legends of this publication, Israel Perez, who — for reasons which he touches on here, but no more than touches — has been absent from these pages for too long. His description of Salinas Valley State Prison as among the very worst in California's prison empire is consistent with everything else we've read from prisoners unfortunate enough to be "housed" there. But the great Wardog has overcome challenges greater than this, and — to paraphrase the quote by Homer with which he ends this piece — this too shall pass!

of betrayal. For I suspect everyone capable of delivering the coup de fond.

As for all of you at The Beat Within, I pray things fair much better. Enclosed with these words are hopes that the seas about you are calm, and may a strong steady wind be at your back. Also, know that I've read several Beats as well as Ed Notes, and the Ed notes alone give me hope for the future. They are filled with wise words and optimism, plus Kroll's piece on the venomous death penalty was hard hitting as any article published. And as I told him I will tell you all: I pray his soul-touching words reach a wider audience than the die-hard Beat fans.

And just when I get around to thanking all those who go above and beyond, to put the pages of The Beat together — and in eager hands — my pen begins to falter. Just the kind of luck that continues to plague you all, right? Well, take it from one of the most troubled prisoners in America's vast prison "industry," your hard work, trials and sacrificing does so much good. When a Beat gets pushed through my "food" slot, it's like a soothing balm over a blistering burn.

So let there be no shaking your fists at God, nor the "powers that be," for you guys are making a drastic difference in many lives. With that said, I will leave you all with a quote which is close to my heart: "Be patient, my soul: thou hath suffered worse than this." (Homer, c. 800 B.C.)

I discovered that I should have foundered long ago, being such an unworthy ocean vessel that I was.
Yet, the pain my foes and prison inflicted upon me, gave me at long last, a star to steer by,
and my will alone filled my sails many a trying time.

INDIO One thing about The Beat is that it lets people who don't normally get the freedom to create like they would want to come up to the plate and form their own creations on their own platform. Each week we're blown away by how imaginative and wise you all are and can't help but be saddened by the fact that some of you may never see the other side of the walls again. And even though we're saddened, there is a part of us that is elated to have had the opportunity to hear your wonderful writings. Indio, who writes from Salinas Valley State Prison in Soledad, CA, lets his presence be known with his first piece titled, "There Is A Man." And in his second poem, "Nobody Knows It But Me" he brilliantly takes a song made by Babyface and revamps it with his own little twist. Interested? We were and decided to read on, maybe you'll do the same.

There Is A Man

There is a man I know who had a rough life
It was filled with aches, pain, struggle, and strife...
Everything to gain and nothing to lose,
Life on the streets left him with mental abuse...
Lessons he learned left him cold and hard
He lost a few partners to the fast life and that girl they
call crystal
He tried to place loyalty in the hands of his friends
When he turned his back they tried to do him in and
sleep with his girl
How could he change his lifestyle if that was all he knew
With no where to go and nothing to do
So many close calls sometimes left in the dark
"Trust no man!" Loyalty kept in his heart
He learned things in life gained severe wisdom
His life is put on hold while doing tiempo behind
These pinta walls

Nobody Knows It But Me

I smile at the judge as he was giving me life
The chains on my waist cut my wrist like a knife
And I'm hurting inside, "And nobody knows it but me."
I heard out the court straight for the pen spun around
Winked at my girl, and then started crying inside
"And nobody knows it but me."
I put my clown suit on and I joke with the crew
As the night rolls on I sing a song or two but I'm crying
inside
"And nobody knows it but me."
I watch the post man pass each and everyday,
But a letter for me is nowhere in sight
"And nobody knows it but me."
I had to cut her loose even though you know it hurt
Taken nothing with me, but a fist full of dirt I'm dying
inside
"And nobody knows it but me."
I'm sorry my love for the life that I lived.
I got more years behind me then I'm promised ahead,
Now I'm dying inside
"And nobody knows it but me."
This mask that I wear slips off in the night,
I scream out your name even though my lips are shut
tight.
I'm sorry my love that things had to be,
I'd love to sing you this song if I thought you'd here me.
But I'm dying inside.
"And nobody knows it but me."

D. AMADOR "MALOE" In that magical way The Beat moves from writer to writer, we're proud to present a new contributor introduced to our family by an old contributor. With the poem, "The Lives That We Lead," D. Amador "Maloe" — the cellie of veteran Beat Without writer Frank Ramos (Solomon) — introduces himself to us as much as he does with the his letter of introduction. Welcome, El Maloe. And thank you Frank Ramos. Each one reach one...

My mind is on a one-way track, and that track is headed to freedom and a better way of life.

The Lives That We Lead

(Verse 1)

I know about the hard live
Robbin' an' stealin'
And hard times
Don't know 'bout money
An' fast cars
'Cause where I grew up
Was on bus stoops
Lookin' for chippers in hot spots
Don't know 'bout dubs on a Lexus
The buses we rode
Had rims wit' exes
I grew up in a home for kids
No Air Jordans
Wore Zips not Keds
No use complainin'
That's the lives we led...

(Hook X2)

Every call that we hear
Is baby Mama drama and tears
We need to wake up
Relinquish all phenomenal fears
Some people snort
Some people smoke
Some people nod is their thing
But everybody gotta lil' drama to bring
No use complainin'
That's the lives that we lead...

(Verse 2)

Nowadays hard livin' is exaggerated
Spun out kids
Hooked on porn
And masturbating

Every family in my world is dysfunctional

Only beans and tortillas

And a will to grow

Forget that

Forget him

Forget it

Forget them

These little weenie pups

Need new adjectives

Stop the violence

And increase the peace

That's what they scream

But dump guns in da streets

All these wars

But we ain't supposed to kill

They come back from Iraq

And that's they greatest skill

I grew up in a home for kids

No use complaining

That's the lives that we led...

(Hook X2)

Every call that we hear
Is baby Mama drama and tears
We need to wake up
Relinquish all phenomenal fears
Some people snort
Some people smoke
Some people nod is their thing
But everybody gotta lil' drama to bring
No use complainin'
That's the lives that we lead...

(Verse 3)

Everyone
That I know

Has to struggle and fight

Maybe kill to survive

Take a life

Or take mine

It's a little analytical

And a bit hypocritical

To listen to Bush

Talk about

Being spiritual

When conflicts arise

He should open his eyes

Have empathy

For these people

That he claims to despise

We're one war short

Of being too stretched

American world domination

Has got people upset

We can only blame ourselves

We voted Bush in for Prez

No use complaining

That's the lives that we lead

It's a mess but in the end

We still sing...

(Hook X2)

Every call that we hear
Is baby Mama drama and tears
We need to wake up
Relinquish all phenomenal fears
Some people snort
Some people smoke
Some people nod is their thing
But everybody gotta lil' drama to bring
No use complainin'
That's the lives that we lead...

Every family in my world is dysfunctional

Letter Of Introduction

I'm excited to finally come across a magazine publication that showcases the thoughts and talents of young incarcerated youth. My cellie is Frank Ramos, and he is a regular contributor to your pages.

One day not long ago, he and I were discussing poems and music avidly. He introduced me to a copy of The Beat Within. Since that first copy, I've seen several issues and all are unique and well put together. Frank suggested that I send you a letter of introduction and maybe a piece of my work...

My name is Daniel Amador, aka El Maloe, and I'm a 29-year-old Chicano currently incarcerated in CSP Lancaster. I've been down for three years because of the bad choices I made after I was discharged off parole in April, 2003. At that time, I thought I was untouchable, and in my mind I was going to make society pay for locking me up for the six years I was down the last time.

The only ones who have paid is my familia and myself. I have 10 years in the state prison system, and I've seen my share of hate and violence. Racism is alive and thriving

behind these walls, and it's easy to let yourself be swept up in the drama and bull shhh that other people create. It's easier to participate and go with the flow than to stand up and be your own man.

I'm proud of who I am and I can honestly tell you racism is not the business. It takes a lot of that energy to hate, and it takes even more to keep up that frame of mind and to constantly front to be accepted. My mind is on a one-way track, and that track is headed to freedom and a better way of life. I can't control my past actions, but I'm in full control of my future, and the choices I make.

That brings me to my ambitions and dreams. And, as I look back, music has always been a passion that festered over the years. Music has become a positive outlet for me to express myself and to convey my thoughts without physical violence or brutal animal acts. The following are a few examples of my newly found talents and I hope you enjoy them.

Keep up the good work, and let me leave you with one last thought: "Lord, protect me from my friends, I can deal with my enemies." (Voltaire, 1694-1778)

Pull Yourself Up

Getting older and a lil' less bolder, less bold 'bout
proving my strength
Two years ago my actions knew no length
Now I know what I got inside,
Don't climb those steps and take that slide
Never to give up, never my morals will change
It's the atmosphere around me that needs to rearrange
If I could've jumped ahead and peeped it out,
Would've done more good without a doubt.
But we're here and in our eye sits a tear
It doesn't mean we're done, it means our future is clear
Now you're state property and everything been stripped
away
Ain't got Mom and Dad no more friends to play.
What's clear to you right now is that you're on your
own.
Probably wanna give up but don't, lil homie,
'Cause you're far from blown
You can still be a thug without blastin' that gun
You can rise out of the ghetto and still have mad fun
You can pull yourself up or take yourself down
You can hit those books or constantly clown
In the quiet of your cell, when laying all alone
You can map out your future or stress out on getting
the phone
You could jump in a gossip or kick back and chill,
But 10 years from now, how would you feel?
I know how you'd feel 'cause it's where I'm at
Tried to skate by in life so on my ass I fell flat
That's when it all comes to surface
The pain of all the days we wasted serves a new
purpose
The purpose it serves is to open our eyes
Reflect on memories, remembering the goodbyes
You ain't got no choice but to keep on going
But you can change the moves you're usually flowing
Reach inside and spend time with your soul
Then, pull yourself up and touch that goal.

JULIA

Writing from the Arizona State Prison Complex in Goodyear, Arizona, Julia hits us with three breathtaking poems. The first is inspiration for us all as she suggests that in order to reach our goals, we must first pull ourselves up. And in this piece we see her powerfully compassionate heart. The second, obviously dedicated to someone in particular is sort of a subliminal wish that something bad happen to a person who's done his share of wrong. Yet she masks the fact that she's wishing this on him by nonchalantly voicing herself as if she as the air of 'he'll get what he's got coming to him' — sheer brilliance. And finally she concludes with the irony of people not wanting to be locked up, yet still being intrigued by the very lifestyle that got them there in the first place. Julia, we've been trying to figure this one out for a while. We can't wait to hear more from you and we're sure the readers will feel the same if they choose to read on.

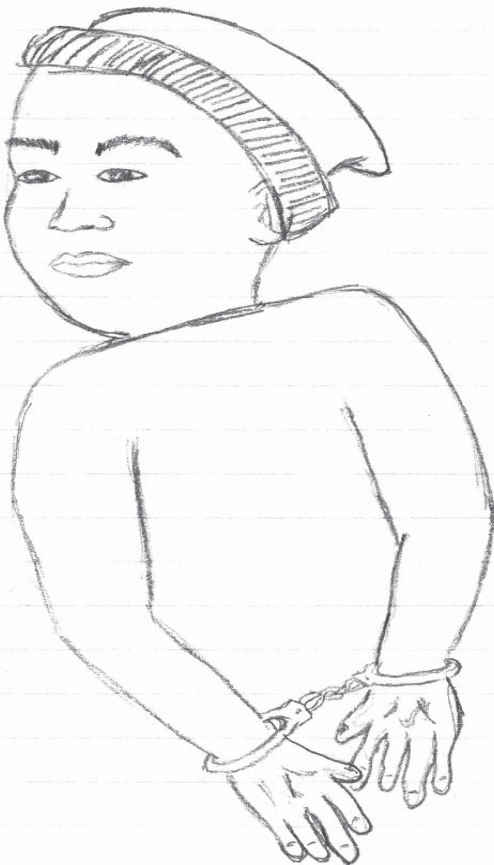
Continue To Play

Sorry is an excuse to do it again
Promises been made to be broken since time began
The good is crossed out by the bad
Love is sure to make even the strong go mad
Stepping in this world is no easy feat
Step wrong and you're sure to lay dead in the street
Watchin' your back is always a must
Never put into another any of your trust
You cry inside but gotta keep your eyes dry
It'll break you down to try to figure out why
Those who pull you out drama ain't always all they pretend
You gotta crawl before you can walk
with your head held high
And you'll never get used to the treacherous goodbye
Our world is filled with nothing but crazy all around
We'll be living on the edge from the cradle to the ground
Its like a drug that's got us all addicted
We almost look forward to the pain inflicted
Even though we could get out we continue to play
We stand firm in this life like there's no way.

You can still be a thug without blastin' that gun
You can rise out of the ghetto and still have mad fun
You can pull yourself up or take yourself down
You can hit those books or constantly clown

The Mark Of The Seven

Someday soon you're gonna meet your maker
He's gonna point to you and say "Why were u a taker?"
You took for so long in a way you could
Instead of loving others the way that you should
You pushed, you pulled, you lied, and you took
Never taking time to or even a good look
Never did you look upon them as your brother or sister
Instead you shook up their soul as if you were a twister
You vowed to stand beside others and with them you'd walk
You mastered your deceit and the profession of smooth talk
A smile on your lips and a touch of your hand
Then you'd blow them away as if they were sand
Not once did you give in any self-manner
But you were sure to wear the names you broke as if it were a banner
You laughed your way through without any conscious or remorse
You flew high on their dreams and you did it without force
Then you'd leave 'em broken, shattered and torn
Move on to another and your next scheme was born
So here you are on your Day of Judgment and decision
And you look at me your lord with so much precision
Forgotten have you that I even existed till today
Again 'cause you were too busy down there
Performing your wicked play
I cannot accept that you the taker can now ask for heaven
For long ago you choose to wear upon your soul the mark of the seven



RAY SANCHEZ JR. One of our favorite writers not only in The Beat, but period, Ray Sanchez Jr. has been passed the point of needing an introduction, but since we can't just publish this without saying a little something, we thought we'd just use this space to stroke ego like we always do. He encompasses a whole lot of what The Beat is about. Going through his own experiences — good and bad, and then reflecting them to us on paper in a way that not only allows to understand them, but also to be able to put ourselves in his shoes. That is truly a gift and he uses his gift for the good of you readers. We always smile at an envelope with his name on the return address because we know that Ray isn't one of those people who play around with The Beat. In fact, he's part of the reason why we take The Beat so seriously. If you're ready to take it serious come join us in awe at a few pieces sent from Pleasant Valley State Prison.

Simply Spittin'

I done jacked macs wit' my Irish cat, a Boston Clippa.
I done sat wit' solid ass solids outta Connecto. Back do' kicka,
Metal belt wig splittas
Related to NJ L-K's wit' AK's fo' throw'ways
Syndicated wit' Texas realist, so feel it or just go'way
My co-kay
Neva stacked up past my nine-ounce limit on drought days
I foul play and I'm 'bout mey
And nobody else, so don't doubt mey,
'Hood credential and block certifications
Accordin' to them rules and regulations
E-40 laced 'em, I'm 40 chasin'
I'm a mental patient who's losin' his patience
Wit' those who's fakin' they's interstatin'
The mail they's makin', the stacks they's takin',
The cars they's scrapin'
Boy, I'm shakin' suckas that sankin'
Homies don't know I'm a thug an' mo'
Than the average bear. The average square
Ain't held mo' corners than I did in the rainy weather
And ain't ever had ties much less the ties I've severed
Boy, I'm slever
Ain't internationally known and don't wanna be
But in a time of crisis you can count on me
Just call on me and my facility
Can't tackle me
Untouchable
Just a 7.62 away from being completely combustible
I'm the scum bag doin' time
Like a clock on the international dateline
Wit' a watch on his waistline
And what I see is mine, and everything I see is fine
"Cause everything is dimes
And as long as I don't drop one, bumpin' gums
Ya' God son's gonna do just fine, avoidin' crime
I'm outta lines and I'm outta time
But ain't outta wine so I'm on the grind
And soon will find, a Top Ramen soup or two
'Cause I plan on eating tonight without havin' to pick a fight
Right? Now hear my homeboy, Ry'

I'm simply spittin' Bay Area spittage like E-40 on spinach
Tweaked out and geeked out wit' a Popeye lineage
Call me 'Finneas!
I'm a fightin' Irish who finna fire this
Oral amplifier at cats who's sirin'
Phonetically faulty horses, so take my courses
On proper spittage and verbally vicious forces
You all for it, kid?
Well, I suggest you take a hit from E-L-F on some shhh
Yeah, that's my fig
Ever since we was puppies he laced me on how to get G's
Step on keys like coke white Nikes; he do it big
Frisco and Daly City regulate and disregard them fonies,
Homie
I'm white and right wit' flavor like Albino apple "Now And Laters"
I'm 'bout my paper, I pull these capers like I'm pulling 'taters
Straight outta Belfast wit' a bomb on my ass
Gotta laugh at my own background and IRA facts, jack
Whole blocks like a Rubic's Cube puzzlin' game
Damn insane! Just check my brain
This ain't the "House of Pain," them cats is lame
I'm slapped wit' game like 50 Cent when he got slapped by game
Ain't it strange?
To have a white immigrant spit about movin' thangs?
I'm movin' thangs, I'm movin', man!

Mistakes And Bad Choices

Home boi, I've had it good; kept it hood, feel my books
Much more than a thug wit' looks (twisted crook, watch
me jook)
Hustle imbedded. Infra reds? Forget it
Bullet proofed wit' loot, protected wit' cheddar
The vest shredder evolved
Only the strong survive so I ride through project halls
County jails in alien counties
Standin' tall when enemies surround me
Felt the fist as they pound me
Felt the hatred start to ground me
Gotta get back up...
A man ain't a man if he ain't got his word and his nuts
Drive the 'Burb to the cuts, and reflect on life
Two to the cage almost took my life
It shook me right; gotta hit bottom so you can see the
night,
'Fore you see the light,
and realize all the time you was blind, it's time to shine
Left behind the nine, the grind, the 7.62's
The military issues and came anew
Wrote a line or two, felt good to reach a chosen few
And those who knew what it do,
When you feed on Spam, peanut butter in a can
Government cheese cold mixed in enchiladas
Made by momma
Can't get tired of cheese today 'cause were on nachos
tomorrow
Malt 'o' meal and powdered milk
Ripped up cotton (what is silk?)
Hand-me-downs from uptown
Got me tired of bein' brown
Got me tired of being down and stuck around the same
ole' streets
Felt the key to be a G was a strap and some D
Big mistake. Slowed my roll and hit the brakes
A tad too late. Sealed my fate, now I wait
2023
That's my earliest possible release date
Made my mistakes and bad choices
Voices unheard in a world of loud noises
Feeling denied the guidance I needed to succeed
Bump my head against the wall hope I make it fo' I fall
Due to the doo-doo I do
My mistake and bad choices
Big bread vendettas
Laced cats in all lead sweaters
A rep as a hitta
Small time nine ounce dope game wig splitta
Wit' an arsenal and an attitude
Wasn't a badder dude
To walk the streets on creep status
And automatic up in foreign latitudes
Yaddadimean?
Shootin' range game. Who needs a lazer beam?
I strike to gleam wit a limited team
Why did gangbanging seem so natural to me?
Is it better to be loved or feared?
Permeate hearts and dreams, or nightmares and scary
things?
Chose wrong, but I know now
Even cattle strikes back when a bully turns the lights
out.
No hide out
Secure enough when you livin' rough
Blamed my upbringing' but the judge said,
"So what, tough luck, chump
You effed up, punk!"
Up a creek without a paddle and I'm shhh outta luck
Quite simply stuck
What do I do now?
Too weak to speak up, too proud for a hand out.

To Whom It May Concern

Controversy seems to surround us. Especially in religious matters. Whether it's saying the "Pledge of Allegiance" in school, printing, "In God We Trust" on our currency, racially profiling Middle Eastern ethnicities and those with Islamic backgrounds at airports and borders, or the forcing of Christian practitioners to be more politically correct. This upsets me. Not only because I myself am a practicing Catholic, but because this over P-Cing of religious views defeats the purpose of America's first amendment. Sure you have the freedom of religion, but does this mean America is to have no religious ties? Shouldn't we remember the context of the amendment in question?

America is a country founded in Christian background. At the time, when they spoke of religious freedom, it was meant the freedom to practice Catholicism, the various off shoots of Christian religion, such as Protestant, Lutheran, Quaker, or even no religion. And although Judaism and Islam probably weren't thought of during the authoring of this key part of our constitution, they were not excluded. We should embrace our religious background instead of pushing for no back ground at all. Who are you, or anyone else, to tell me I can't pray in class? Is it not my right? Do I not have religious freedom? If my neighbor chooses to celebrate Ramadan in the street, should I tell him, "No! Stop! Other's will find this offensive. "Lighten up America. The government has not instituted a state religion or denounced any specific belief either. So how can people tell other people what not to practice? How can one atheist or agnostic group get pissed that the pledge of allegiance says, "one nation, under God..." How dare you! How dare you act so hypocritically claiming religious rights while denouncing another's! You don't like it, don't say the pledge. You're mad, "In God We Trust" is on the money you have, then sand it off your own

RAY SANCHEZ JR. (CONT.)

damn change. Erase it from your own damn dollar bills. The traditions of this nation should be respected if not believed in. whether or not you agree, you should acknowledge what has been, is, and should remain to be.

I believe everyone has the right to practice whatever belief they choose as long as the realizing of your beliefs do not entail the harming of others. The authors of the pledge, the printers of the money we spend; they exercised their religious beliefs without harming others. Is it right then, that we denounce their beliefs, especially after they've not only become part of American culture but American history as well? Think on it with an open, non-zealous mind. Think on all issues of religion in such a way, less you become as fanatical and close minded as those who wage war in the name of God.

Emmanuel Kant, author of the Universability Principle, asks that one visualizes his or her proposed actions in terms of being a universal moral law, binding on everyone. If what you are about to do is not self-contradicting, can apply to yourself as it does to everyone else in a fair and universal manner, then go ahead. The problem is, if we follow Kant's formula and the amendments of the constitution, by editing the religious practices of others, we violate past authors' right to freedom of speech as well as religious beliefs. And no one wants their own freedoms violated, therefore, the arguments of the 'politically correct' atheist fanatic is self-defeating.

This is my belief and I personally don't think any should take what I say to heart without reflecting on what I offer and researching it for yourselves. I implore all, seek the truth as it rings true to you, for your truth may not be mine, but may not be incorrect either, for that matter. Thank you.

I believe everyone has the right to
practice whatever belief they choose as
long as the realizing of your beliefs do not
entail the harming of others.

My Everything

You're my everything
The song my heart sings
The air I breathe and the way diamonds gleam
The epitome of all love songs
If all love's wrong, arrest me now
I'll do the time for the crime
If the crime will make you smile
The mother of my child, the joy of my life
Like TLC; "Crazy, Sexy, Cool." My future wife
Your skin, so soft, is the thing dreams are made of
A shade of,
Passion personified
I can't deny, front, or lie
I'm completely infatuated. You's excavatin'
Emotions from my soul I thought dead and outdated
I play it like I made it
Game orientated, bad guy Bay Raider
Stiff armin' all these haters, but caught short
Your loves got me sweetly chokin' like Newports
A new course plotted
You guide my way and soothe my heart,
'Till all pains forgotten.

Like Father, Like Son

Didn't have a tail as a sperm cell, just a pitch fork and horns
The taint of Satan on me since the day I was born
Memories of mamma screamin' I ain't natural, just a demon
Just hate and hungry meat, evil deeds and rosy cheeks
Behold your only freak destined to rule the street
(I heard fifteen babies died the night I was conceived)
So bleed for me and plot,
Upon Jesus up on his cross
Who said forgive your enemy; I say you break him off
Not ready for the world yet, so daddy sent my ass to prison
Where the convicts ain't corrected but can show me how they
livin'
Grinnin', sinnin', satisfied
I see the world with evil eyes. Profit in everything I try
Sex and drugs and twisted lies
I twist the real and have you feel
To find my love you have to kill
Startin' wars amongst yo' kind
Assign 'em colors and hand 'em nines
Give 'em blocks in which to grind
Tell 'em heaven ain't hard to find
It's between her thighs and in a pipe
It's a dollar bill and a brand new ride
It's earnin' stripes
It's respect in yo' click and slanging bricks
What's a surprise is that they's feelin' it!
Influenced wit' the villainous
They say it's all they know, I say them figgas is full of shhh
Poppa's greatest work was pride
And the laziness that rules their lives
They call the white man anti-Christ,
But I walk amongst them in the night
Could it be they's really blind?
Or perhaps these cats don't realize
To see the world you must use your eyes
Open your mind to a brand new road
One in which you hardly go
Until they see, I'll take it slow
'Cause I'm pro when I'm taking souls
I just give 'em 'freedom' and let 'em go

THEE MOUSEMAN

In his letter, this writer asked for our feedback on his belief that tragedy isn't just an event, but a series of events mapped together like waves. And our feedback is that it's an excellent idea. So excellent that we'd like it to be elaborated more. We feel like the idea for the piece was so great that our expectations of the piece was higher than normal. And at the end of the piece we found ourselves wanting to hear more about your belief. Most of us actually agree that tragedy is built upon and doesn't just happen over night. If you feel this way, maybe you'll enjoy his writing. By the way, if you don't already know, he's writing from Mule Creek State Prison in Lone, CA.

Dear Beat

Here ya' go, more webs out of the melon! Maybe you can utilize them in your publication for the readers.

Normally what I do is take this and invite the kids to speak on it! "When is a tragedy a tragedy?" Tragedy is created long before its felt effects. While you and I may see it on our "developed terms," the kids will see it another way. I let one of the youngest kids here in prison read it to get some feedback. He said it would make a good rap song! Okay!?!

He also said, "Never looked at it like that!" Which is good, 'cause that's why we write these, I should think! To flick a light switch, I never lay it out, I spoon feed!

I am of the opinion that I cannot say anything that has not been said before! All I can do is chop it up and make it more acceptable to youth. It's been my experience that big words and long writing just bore kids. Bored me when I was a kid!! Only the music changes, attitude is the same.

Any who, your feedback is appreciated and accepted. Always (here)

GREG JOHNSON

This next piece by one of our oldest contributors, Greg Johnson speaks volumes to those of you who will be leaving the juvenile justice system to CYA or prison. Or if you happen to be in CYA or prison and need some reinforcement about how to survive, well, we think Greg's piece, "Adapt," is an excellent start/heads up. Of course we hope the many of you reading this will never have to worry about the life Greg writes about, but in truth it saddens us to know too many of you will have to learn the hard way, as did Greg, who once upon a time was a young writer in our weekly workshops in SF/YGC. Today Greg, who is determined to find his freedom from incarceration, is a lifer writing from Pleasant Valley State Prison.

Adapt

When God designed his laws of nature, for the earth,
the ocean, and sky
He declared to all He created that only the strong should survive.

Men make laws for others to follow,
they decide who's chained and who's free
Men measure men in the balance,
then hand down their final decree.

The real law is the law of survival,
that each man must learn on his own
Here are a few that I've written, the rest you find out alone.

Now, this is the law of prison, for the yard, the wing, and the cell
Those that obey them will profit, those that ignore them will fail.

Don't dwell on what' going on outside,
it's just gonna screw up your brain
Take care of things you can handle,
it will keep you from going insane.

Don't mess with serious long timers,
there's a reason they're paying big dues
You're not being smart if you crowd them,
they don't have a whole lot to lose.

Being chummy with guards will get you nothing except other
men's mistrust and hate
Ninety percent of what guards learn,
is told to them by some inmate.

Tragedy

"Men play (with) at tragedy because they don't believe in the reality of tragedy, which actually being staged in the civilized world." So it has been said.

So and so died on the mean streets of ... How often do we see an "RIP" written about a young man by a young man? Tragedy is not one event; it is the wave of pain.

Tragedy

Ace-Deuce's limp body rest in your arms. Blood spilling out not to fast, not to slow. But God Almighty it just won't stop. Down, down, down, down over the curb into the gutter down, down, down in the drain with the day's left overs, too much of, not wanted and out on it's way to the sea. "A gurgling sound. What was that? Sounded like "mom," maybe! Why.... Why?"

While a young woman who looks too old, fiddles with some beads on a rosary. Wondering, "Why is my baby boy not home yet?" As darkness flows over her face, there is a knock at the door. Mom knows, mom always knows. It's a mother's curse. Why, why, why?

"We're sorry mamé, do you have a son named..."
Bam! "I used to," she thinks as the world quickly rises two feet. Oh! Realizing it was her knees that gave out. "I'll just stay here awhile." To never hear my baby's voice again, I will never feel again. Why, why, why?

Just a couple blocks over, a young woman who looks much too old fiddles with the beads on her rosary wondering, "What has her baby boy done this night?"
Why, why, why?

"Tragedy is a wave."

Don't be a leech or a moocher,
always looking for handouts or loans
Go out and get your own hustle,
and learn how to stand on your own.

If you're one who always needs partners,
you're going to find out in the end
Each time that someone gets taken,
they're taken by a so-called friend.

If you want to stay out of trouble,
honor your debts when they're due
Don't insult a man with excuses,
and make him come looking for you.

Have respect for the man you cell with,
and all things that are his concern
Show him that you can be trusted, and expect the same in return.

Don't go around boasting and bragging,
because time after time it's been shown
That the man who does the most talking,
is the first to get his cover blown.

Every deal on the yard is a hustle,
the price is what the traffic will beat
In each deal remember the law is: let both buyer and seller beware.

Don't let your goods go for a promise,
getting paid is a hard lesson learned
Because the law on the yard is: a sucker deserves to get burned.

Put trust in the laws that are proven,
hold onto the ones that are sound
If in doubt, remember the law is: what goes around, comes around.

Learn well all the laws of survival
and the ways in which they're applied
Don't think that they're only for convicts,
they're also for the people outside.

Remember, once you're on the outside,
no matter what else you may lack
One law stands above all the others, that law is: Don't ever come back!

CHRIS GRAJEDA

It is so good to have our dear ol' friend Chris Grajeda back in the pages of The Beat Within. We knew that would be the case too, given he has been a man of his word since his departure from 150 aka Alameda County Juvenile Hall, which he stated he would keep writing us, and that he has with probably two of his best pieces in a long while! For those of you who do not recognize Chris' work, when he was in the hall he went by the name Lil' Chris and C-Nut, this week the maturity shines bright with these two very thoughtful pieces. Until the next one, here's Chris Grajeda!

As a Child

As a young child all I asked for was acceptance,
But all I seemed to receive was hate and neglectance,
This hate which burns like a fire deep inside of me,
Will spread like an oil spill in the ocean so smoothly
and rapidly,
Now I know to some people this might not sound right,
But all a child dreams of is for someone to hold tight,
Now I ain't just saying be perfect just show that you
care,
And you'll be satisfied your child feels safety no fear,
Please just look at the big picture see what I see,
Imagine a child on his knees asking
"Do you really love me?"
Now I'm not putting any one down I just want you to
see,
A child will never forget the amount of love that he
receives,
So this is to all parents even the ones that we deceive,
All a child needs is love and honesty!

LIL' ITALY Not only a master at piecing words together, but also a master at being strong and courageous enough to go through everything he's been through. We haven't heard from him in a while so it's nice to see his name in our pages again. We wonder why we lock our greatest talent behind bars? What's the answer Lil' Italy? And the people that make us wonder this are people like this next writer, who's writing from the Desoto Correctional Institution in Arcadia, Florida. We appreciate all your words and can't wait for the next time we hear from you again.

Reflecting

For my past
I always seem to pay
My head I lay
On the pillow of tomorrow's promise
A better day
If I'm ever to become astray
Skies turn to grey
Open my eyes to reveal my place
I'll find my way
Slay these demons that infect my soul
They'll start to cower
Spark this art that marks my darkest hour
As hearts devour
Any doubts residing in my pride
So deep inside
Insecurities hinder my success
They break my stride,
But I grow stronger with the days that pass
Raise my past
I'm underdog against all odds
Whose paved a vast path
With these lessons learned
Its message burned
Deep within my conscious fern
A testing turn
Into the emptiness that cloaks my life,
But rest assured
A flush of luck I've never struck
My blessings earned
That has now equipped me for the long run
Your strong son
Is prepared to face the song's sum
This Psalm's done....

A Lil' Game

I see fake people act like something their not,
Doing the totally opposite of what they was taught
That's why they end up in jail locked up and caught
I just wanted to drop some game,
To tell the young soldados out there
that still remains
Doing life in jail, that don't bring you fame,
That just brings your moms and pops a lot of pain
So stay on track and go down the right lane
Don't grow up and let your record stain your name,
Grow up and stay on top and remain
Well that's all for now
I just wanted to drop some game!

Grief

Grief will clutch your very soul
Consume it whole
Our lives are just a weary stroll
Truth be told
We live in shadows of the past deceased
Rest in peace
Memories will stand the test of time
They'll never cease
For I know your heart aches with pain
I've felt the same
I've been drained from the strain of pain
Yet, still I'm sane
I'll keep pushing when my strength is gone
I'll be strong
Keep my grip when I begin to slip
I'll hold on
I live to fight another day because I pray
And I place my burdens with the Lord
He guides the way
Loneliness becomes a sanctuary
A place to hide
I find shelter from my adversaries
This fear inside
I died a long time ago
Nobody noticed
Never took the time to get to know me
They never focused
For my eyes portrayed a million deaths
For you can tell
That my journey has been a gruesome test
Not far from hell
It dwells within my deepest thoughts
Do I run
Or surrender to eternal darkness?
Do I succumb?
I'm numb
Should I feel remorse?
It's like I'm forced
To discover the origin of my sins
To find its source
Throughout a course of a single week
It repeats
Do I greet death with open arms,
A friendly meet?
I ask these questions
With these answers sought
Will they be brought
Or do I live a life of mystery?
These secrets locked....



I personally don't think any should take what I say to heart without reflecting on what I offer and researching it for yourselves. I implore all, seek the truth as it rings true to you, for your truth may not be mine, but may not be incorrect either, for that matter.

check out the rest of Ray Sanchez's BWO piece on page77

